923.295
V G.

Gandhi : A Life

GANDHI

A Life

GANDHI

A Life

Acknowledgement of courtesy:
Navajivan Trust for the quotations
from Gandhiji's writings;
Sri Sambhu Shaha for the photograph
used as frontispiece and on jacket;
Sri Biswarup Bose for the
drawing by Nandalal Bose on the cover

GANDHI

A Life

Krishna Kripalani

Pg-61
B-3029

Sh. Ghulam Mohamed & Sons
Booksellers & Publishers
MAISUMA BAZAR.
SRINAGAR.

Orient Longmans

© Krishna Kripalani 1968

District Library
Nawa Kadal, Srinagar.

Acc. No. 8824 C
Cost... ... ...
Date 20-12-76

ORIENT LONGMANS LIMITED
Registered Office :
Hamilton House, Block 'A', Connaught Place, New Delhi 1
Regional Offices:
Nicol Road, Ballard Estate, Bombay 1
17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 13
36-A Mount Road, Madras 2
3/5 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 1

923.2954
G
GK

First published 2 October, 1968
Reprinted 1969

923.2954
KRI

PRINTED IN INDIA
by Sujit J. Patwardhan, at Sangam Press Ltd., 17 Kothrud, Poona 4 and published by W. H. Patwardhan, Manager, Orient Longmans Limited, 3/5 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 1.

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri and Sarayu Trust.

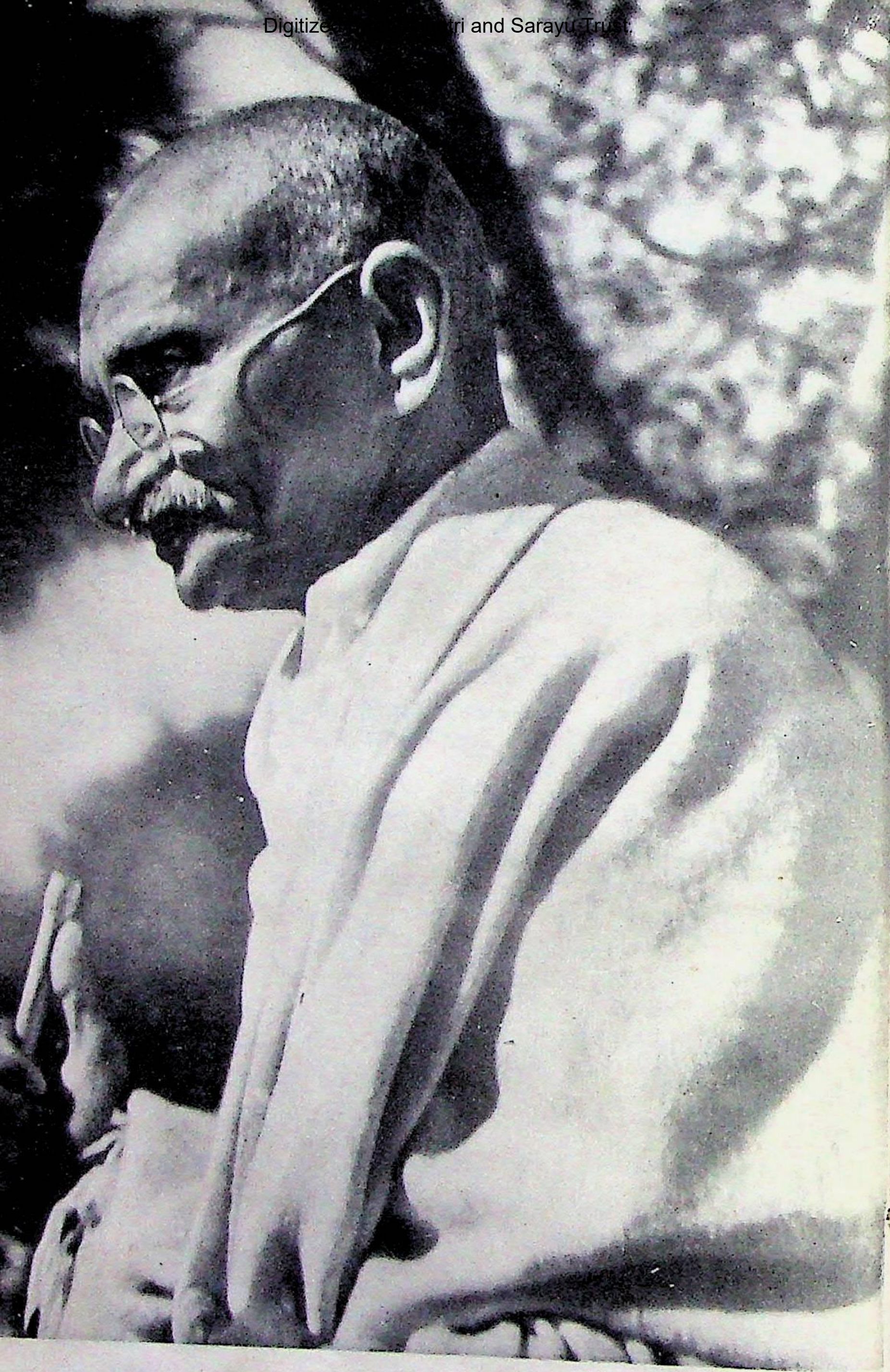

Photo : Sambhu Shaha

To
NANDITA
who in life
encouraged this writing
and in death
sustained it

Contents

Page

INTRODUCTORY ix

BIRTH AND UPBRINGING 1

DESTINY BECKONS 7

FRUSTRATION AT HOME 15

DESTINY IN AMBUSH 18

CHRISTIAN CONTACTS 24

LAWYER AND PATRIOT 28

IN YOKE 32

FAITH AND FANCY 36

THE GREEN PAMPHLET 39

THE HOUSEHOLDER 45

BOER WAR 50

INDIAN INTERLUDE 53

BACK TO THE BATTLEFIELD 56

PERSONAL QUESTS 60

HOUSEHOLD IN JOHANNESBURG 65

ZULU REBELLION AND AFTER 67

THE CHALLENGE 70

A TEST OF FAITH 73

THROUGH THE FIRE 77

A MISSION IN LONDON 80

DIALOGUE ON THE SEA 84

TOLSTOY FARM 88

A LULL AND THE STORM 91

FAREWELL TO AFRICA 96

CONTENTS

DUTY TO THE EMPIRE 99
HOMECOMING 101
REHEARSAL IN INDIA 105
RIDING THE STORM 110
A GREAT UPSURGE 114
THE PENDULUM SWINGS 118
BRICK BY BRICK 122
A CREATIVE RESPITE 125
ON THE MARCH 129
INTERLUDE IN THE WEST 132
CHRISTMAS GIFTS 137
A HOSTAGE 141
INTO THE MAELSTROM 145
QUIT INDIA 150
GROPING IN THE DARK 155
A FIGHTER ON MANY FRONTS 158
A DAWN RED WITH BLOOD 162
THE LONE EXPIATOR 166
WALK ALONE 171
PRICE OF FREEDOM 175
ONE-MAN BOUNDARY FORCE 181
DO OR DIE 186
HE DID AND DIED 194
INDEX 199

Introductory

No previous century in the long and eventful history of the Indian sub-continent has witnessed such dynamic change in the political, social and economic life of the people as the century that opened with Gandhi's birth and is now drawing to its close. When he was born the British rule had been firmly established in India. The uprising of 1857, variously called the Sepoy Mutiny, the Great Rebellion, or the First War of Independence, had merely served to consolidate a commercial adventure into an empire. The subjection was not merely political. It was so effectively reinforced by intellectual and cultural imitation that the new generation of educated Indians were eager to subject themselves to its 'civilizing mission'. No subjection is so absolute as that which is willingly offered. No chains bind so hard as those which are hugged. So complete was the tutelage and so servile the surrender that it seemed that the British Empire in India was divinely ordained and had come to stay.

When Gandhi died, it was as a free nation that India mourned the loss. The dispossessed had recovered the lost heritage and the dumb had found a voice. Those who had shrunk in fear could now hold their heads high. The disarmed had forged a weapon against which the British bayonet was powerless. It was a weapon unique in the world's armoury. It could win without killing.

The story of this miracle is also the story of Gandhi's life, for he more than any other individual was the architect as well as engineer of this historic phenomenon. It is not for nothing that his grateful countrymen have called him the Father of the Nation.

And yet it would be an exaggeration to claim that Gandhi alone wrought this transformation. No individual, however gifted, may claim exclusive credit as sole architect of a historical process. A succession of remarkable predecessors and elder contemporaries had laboured with spade and sword to clear the jungle overgrown with deadly weeds of fear, superstition and lethargy. They had helped to prepare the ground which the genius of Gandhi turned into a mighty battle-field through which he led his countrymen in a grand march to freedom. Had he been born a hundred years earlier he could hardly have been what he became. Nor could India have achieved, but for Gandhi's leadership, her destiny in the way she did—a way so splendid that it brought freedom as well as glory. It was a way so unique that already men are wondering if such an experiment could ever be repeated.

Gandhi lived, suffered and died for his people. And yet it is not in relation to his country alone that his life has significance. Nor is it only as a patriot or revolutionary reformer that he will be remembered by future generations. Whatever else Gandhi was, he was essentially a moral force whose appeal to the conscience of man is both universal and lasting. If he worked primarily for his countrymen, it was because he was born among them and because their suffering and humiliation supplied the necessary incentives to his moral sensibility and his political crusade. The lesson of his life is thus for all to read.

Did Gandhi's greatness rest solely on his ardent love of his country and his dynamic leadership in a successful political struggle, it might be adequate reason for his people's gratitude to the Father of the Nation, but it would hardly explain why the rest of the world should particularly honour his memory or find stimulus in his words. There is no dearth of Fathers of Nations in the world today; indeed, some of them the world could well have done without. But this frail, dark man in loin-cloth was much more than the Father of his Nation.

His achievements were many. Each one of them, judged by the manner of its execution or by its fruit, would have made his name honoured anywhere in the world. He brought liberation from foreign rule to a fifth of the human race. And India's freedom was, in a way, the harbinger of freedom to many countries of South-east Asia and Africa.

Of no less significance was what he did for those who were once despised as 'untouchables'. He broke their centuries-old shackles of caste tyranny and social indignity. By his insistence that freedom was to be measured by the all-round social, moral and economic well-being of the millions who live in the villages, as well as by the means he evolved for achieving such freedom, he showed a way of life which may one day provide an alternative to both a regimented and an acquisitive society.

His very death was an achievement in itself, for the martyrdom shamed his people out of a hysteria of hatred and fratricide, and helped the Union of India to consolidate the secular and democratic character of the new-born State.

But no human achievement, however great, can last for ever or remain static in a changing world. What Gandhi achieved may be wrecked or may go awry or may dissolve into no more than a memory. But Gandhi will live, for the man was greater than his achievements. In him was the universal man in eternal quest of truth and moral perfection. As he himself put it: 'I am more concerned in preventing the brutalization of human nature than in the prevention of the suffering of my own people...If we are all sons of the same God and partake of the same divine essence, we must partake of the sin of every person whether he belongs to us or to another race.'

'There are patriots in India, as indeed among all peoples,' wrote Rabindranath Tagore in 1938, 'who have sacrificed for their country as much as Gandhiji has done, and some who have had to suffer much worse penalties than he has had to endure; even as in the religious sphere there are ascetics in this country compared to the rigours of whose practices Gandhiji's life is one of comparative ease. But these patriots are mere patriots and nothing more; and these ascetics are mere spiritual athletes, limited as men by their very virtues; while this man seems greater than his virtues, great as they are.'

Gandhi founded no church and though he lived by faith he left behind no dogma for the faithful to quarrel over. Deeply devout and loyal (in his own fashion) to the religion in which he was born, he rejected fearlessly and uncompromisingly any dogma or practice that seemed to negate the law, as he conceived it, of universal morality and charity. As early as 1909 his Baptist friend, Joseph Doke, wrote of him: 'I question whether any system of religion can absolutely hold him. His views are too closely allied to Christianity to be entirely Hindu, and too deeply saturated with Hinduism to be called Christian, while his sympathies are so wide and catholic that one would imagine "he has reached a point where the formulae of sects are meaningless".'

Twentyseven years later Gandhi warned some of his co-workers who had formed a Society named after him to propagate his ideals: 'There is no such thing as Gandhism, and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried, in my own way, to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems . . . The opinions I have formed, and the conclusions I have arrived at, are not by any means final. I may change them tomorrow if I find better ones. I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both, on as vast a scale and as best as I could. In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors . . .

'Well, my entire philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have just said. You will not call it Gandhism, for there is no ism about it. And no elaborate literature or propaganda is needed to explain it. The scriptures have been quoted against my postulation, but I have held faster than ever to my firm conviction that truth ought not to be sacrificed for anything whatsoever. Those who believe in the elementary truths I have laid down can propagate them *only* by living them.'

Gandhi gave no attributes to God save Truth, and prescribed no ritual for attaining it save honest and unrelenting search through means that harm no living thing. Who dare therefore claim Gandhi for his own except by claiming him for all?

Of no less universal significance is the fact that Gandhi was not born as he came to be, and, although he made himself unique, he did not exhibit in early years any such extraordinary faculty as is not shared by the common run of boys of that age. Unlike some of his remarkable contemporaries, no muse inspired him as had possessed young Rabindranath, he was not tormented by the mystic visions of a Ramakrishna, nor driven by the overpowering zeal of a Vivekananda. He was an ordinary child like most of us. If anything he was less precocious than many children, less wild than most and was inhibited by more than normal shyness, a handicap from which he suffered a long time.

Timid and diffident, homely in looks, mediocre in studies and undistinguished in general, there was nothing in his physical appearance or mental equipment as a child or young lad to suggest the volcanic potential that lay dormant in him. No muffled rumbling was audible, no flash nor smoke ever escaped from the placid surface to give an inkling of the sword of fire that was being forged within.

It was as if Providence, jealously guarding the rare instrument she was forging in secret and anxious to ward off the evil eye, had kept it hid in a sheath too commonplace to attract notice. Not even the sheath itself had an inkling or premonition of the fire slumbering within or of the destiny that lay in wait ahead, in ambush as it were. No consciousness, not even a vague stirring, of genius haunted the seemingly nondescript lad, no erratic frenzy ruffled the even surface of an uneventful childhood, no passionate longing forced its way out of the deep cavern of the subconscious.

The blissfully unconscious lad was spared all premature strain which has been the making, as also the unmaking, of many a genius and a prophet, till his mind had ripened and matured and was able to bear the stress of the inner explosion, when it came, bravely and lightly, without flinching, without pride, without pugnacity.

It is true that a marked sense of loyalty to parents, of devotion to duty and aversion to untruthfulness were evident in the small schoolboy, but in the social milieu he was brought up in, these qualities were not very extraordinary. What was truly extraordinary was buried so deep in the spirit that there was hardly a visible evidence of it at that age.

One may therefore derive inspiration and courage from the knowledge that if this commonplace lad made himself into what he later became by a steady exertion of the will, there is no obvious reason why others should not succeed in doing the same. If a timid boy, who dared not go to bed without a light —'I would imagine ghosts coming from one direction, thieves from another, and serpents from a third'—could become the most fearless of men, there is hope for all.

Gandhi's genius, if that word must be used, lay in his persistence, fearless and tireless, in taking pains in obedience to a restless moral urge. His life, after he had crossed the threshold of youth, was one long march of striving without a pause, a quest for truth, 'unhasting, unresting', not abstract or metaphysical truth, but such truth as can be realized in human relations. He climbed step by step, each step no bigger than a man's, till when we saw him at the height he seemed more than a man. 'Generations to come, it may be,' wrote Albert Einstein, himself a towering mind of the century, 'will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.' If at the end Gandhi seemed like no other man, it is good to remember that when he began he was like any other man.

Therein lies the unique beauty of his life and its lesson. Fortunately, he has himself recorded for us the main incidents until his emergence in the full glare of public limelight when he almost ceased to have any privacy. He has described with meticulous care and uninhibited veracity the evolution of his moral and political consciousness. Had he not done so, there would have been no dearth of devout chroniclers in our credulous land to invent mysterious portents announcing his birth, and to invest him with a divine halo even while he lay as an embryo in the mother's womb. How right Tagore was when he said:

> Your speech is simple, my Master,
> but not theirs who talk of you.

Was Gandhi a politician or a saint? Was he a saint among politicians or a politician among saints? Can one be both? Did he succeed in spiritualizing politics, as has been claimed by his admirers? Does the nation which proclaims him as Father bear witness to this claim? These are questions which posterity will continue to ask.

Meanwhile, all one can say is that whatever he was, he was like no other man of his age. 'Perhaps he will not succeed,' wrote Tagore ten years before Gandhi's death. 'Perhaps he will fail as the Buddha failed, as the Christ failed, to wean men from their iniquities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come.'

Birth and Upbringing

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI was born on 2 October 1869, at Porbandar, a small town on the western coast of India which was then one of the many princely states in Kathiawar, now better known as Saurashtra, in Gujarat. This almost rectangular peninsula, less than thirty thousand square miles in area, juts into the Arabian Sea to its west, is bounded by the Gulf of Cutch above, the Gulf of Cambay below, and is flanked on its north by the Desert of Rann.

Politically one of the most backward regions of India until recently, it had been the battle-ground over the centuries of many invading hordes and was littered with more than three hundred tiny principalities, some no bigger than a village, and none bigger than a fair-sized district in what was then known as British India. The rulers, variously styled as Rana or Thakur or Nawab, were petty autocrats, envious of one another and always itching to quarrel but held in leash by fear of their common overlord in the person of the resident British Agent.

In this feudal atmosphere of chronic insecurity, intrigue and arbitrary justice, heroic outlaws had their day. Some of their exploits are legendary and are still remembered in ballad and folk tale. The people nurtured in the uncertain climate of turbulent civil strife were robust and sturdy, with a tradition of seafaring and commercial enterprise. They were devout and superstitious, as people generally tend to be in such environment. The more so as Dwarka on the western coast is a holy city of the Hindus, being the legendary capital of the kingdom over which Lord Krishna of the Bhagavad Gita had ruled. To this Vaishnav tradition of Hinduism the influence of Jainism and later of Muslim Sufism had added their own pieties. The result was a characteristically Indian brew of orthodoxy and tolerance, callousness and compassion, indulgence and austerity.

Such was the social setting in which Mohan was born of a middle class family of Vaishya or the trading caste. The ancestors were said to have been originally grocers, but the family had steadily risen in social status and Mohan's grandfather, Uttamchand, had become the Dewan or Prime Minister to the Rana of Porbandar. A man of upright character, honest and fearless, he had to suffer for it when after the Ruler's death he incurred the displeasure of the Queen Regent. He fled for safety to the neighbouring state of Junagadh where the Muslim Nawab offered him asylum.

When he entered the Nawab's presence he saluted him with the left hand, explaining the discourtesy by saying that his right hand was still pledged to Porbandar. Loyalties were narrow and their code rigid in that feudal age which had survived in that backwater right up to the 20th century almost. The Nawab was generous, and appreciating the bold reply, not only let him off with a nominal penalty but conferred a special favour on the brave refugee, and later used his influence to have him welcomed back to Porbandar when the new Rana came to the throne.

Uttamchand's son Karamchand Gandhi became in turn the Dewan of Porbandar. He too, like his father, had had little formal education, but was truthful, courageous and of a stern character, with a fund of practical commonsense. Recalling his many virtues, his even more truthful and austere son recorded later: 'To a certain extent he might have been given to carnal pleasure, for he married for the fourth time when he was over forty.' It was fortunate that he did so, for the fourth wife Putlibai bore him the Mahatma. Named Mohan, the mother affectionately called him Moniya.

She was deeply religious, gentle and devout, and unrelenting in her observance of the prescribed ritual of fast and prayer. She left a deep impress on the mind of her son who almost worshipped her. Years later, in the Yeravda Jail in Poona, Gandhi said to his secretary-companion Mahadev Desai: 'If you notice any purity in me, I have inheritd it from my mother, and not from my father . . . The only impression she ever left on my mind is that of saintliness.'

Mohan went to an elementary school in Porbandar where he found it difficult to master the multiplication tables—'My intellect must have been sluggish and my memory raw.' Soon after, the family moved to Rajkot, another small state in Kathiawar where, too, his father became the Dewan. In Rajkot Mohan attended a primary, and later a high, school. Though conscientious, he was a 'mediocre student', extremely shy and timid, diffident in company and averse to games. The only incident of his otherwise drab school career which might be deemed significant as indicating his moral sensibility occurred when the Education Inspector visited his class and set a spelling test. Seeing that Mohan had spelled 'kettle' wrong, the class teacher prompted him with his toe to copy the correct spelling from his neighbour's slate, but Mohan obstinately ignored the hint and was later chided for his 'stupidity'. 'I never could learn the art of copying,' recalled the Mahatma.

The life outside the class was, however, less uneventful and drab, and bore witness that the seemingly timid boy was not averse to taking risks for the sake of a moral adventure or by way of experiment. We can also discern a hint of that passion for reforming others which later became so dominant a trait of the great crusader, though in this case the zeal almost led him astray. He was attracted to the company of a Muslim friend of his elder brother's, one Sheikh Mahtab, whose athletic build and physical daring exercised a fascination on Mohan who himself was of a comparatively slight build and was scared of ghosts, thieves and snakes. Mahtab was afraid of nothing and flaunted his disregard of social and moral scruples. 'This friend's exploits cast a spell over me.'

Sheikh Mahtab convinced Mohan that the 'mighty Englishman' was able to rule over the 'puny Indian' because the

Englishman derived his 'herculean' strength from animal flesh. So Mohan who came of an orthodox vegetarian family took to tasting cooked meat clandestinely—his first experiment in patriotism. But apart from the inherited sentiment which made him feel, after he had gulped down a piece, as if 'a live goat were bleating within me', he had to wrestle with the fact that such secret repasts had to be hidden from his parents, entailing an inevitable falsehood. This proved too weighty a burden on his conscience, and after a few such hazards he gave up the experiment, consoling himself with the reflection: 'When they are no more and I have found my freedom, I will eat meat openly.'

There were also other adventures which included smoking stumps of cigarettes thrown away by elders and, when the excitement grew, 'stealing the servant's coppers for the purpose of smoking'. A more serious hazard occurred when Sheikh Mahtab took him to a prostitute. 'I was almost struck blind and dumb in this den of vice. I sat near the woman on her bed, but I was tongue-tied. She naturally lost patience with me, and showed me the door with abuses and insults. I then felt as though my manhood had been injured and wished to sink into the ground for shame. But I have ever since given thanks to God for having saved me.' When Gandhi recalled this incident he was already a Mahatma and honest enough to add: 'From a strictly ethical point of view, all these occasions must be regarded as moral lapses; for the carnal desire was there, and it was as good as the act.'

Another lapse of which the memory clung to his mind was when he stealthily clipped a bit of solid gold from his brother's armlet and sold it to clear the latter's debt. The guilt weighed on him until he made a written confession of it to his father, asking for adequate punishment. 'He read it through, and pearl-drops trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper . . . Those pearl-drops cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away.'

Commenting in later life on the disastrous consequences of such personal attachment to a friend (in this case Sheikh

Mahtab), Gandhi observed: 'He who would be friends with God must remain alone, or make the whole world his friend.'

At the age of thirteen while still in school, Mohan was married to Kasturbai who was of the same age. For a lad of that age marriage meant little more than a round of festivities, new clothes to wear, a picturesque ceremony with sonorous chants in Sanskrit and he himself occupying the centre of the stage. Above all, there was a new mate to play with, strange, sweet and docile.

But the impact of sex was not long in coming and he has himself recalled it for us with admirable candour. He suffered the torment of lust and never deceived himself that it was anything else. Nor was he ever to absolve himself of the responsibility by transferring the guilt to the woman as the temptress and source of evil. Indeed, the infinite tenderness and affection, which were so marked a feature of his relation to women all his life, owed not a little to his personal experience of the fiery ordeal which he had passed through with his young and innocent wife.

It was this inner alchemy, transforming the base metal into gold, which made Tagore say of Gandhi: 'He condemns sexual life as inconsistent with the moral progress of man, and has a horror of sex as great as that of the author of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, but, unlike Tolstoy, he betrays no abhorrence of the sex that tempts his kind. In fact, his tenderness for woman is one of the noblest and most consistent traits of his character, and he counts among the women of his country some of his best and truest comrades in the great movement he is leading.'

An incident that was burnt into his memory occurred on the night his father died. He was in attendance at the sick bed giving the massage, but his thoughts hovered round the young wife lying in bed, waiting, so he hoped, for his coming. When his uncle offered to relieve him, Mohan was overjoyed and rushed straight to his bedroom. 'My wife, poor thing, was fast asleep. But how could she sleep when I was there? I woke her up.' A few minutes later a knock on the door interrupted his frenzy with the melancholy news that the father had expired.

The shame of carnal desire at the critical hour of his father's death was 'a blot I have never been able to efface or forget, and I have always thought that although my devotion to my parents knew no bounds and I would have given up anything for it, yet it was weighed and found unpardonably wanting because my mind was at the same moment in the grip of lust. I have therefore always regarded myself as a lustful, though faithful, husband. It took me long to get free from the shackles of lust, and I had to pass through many ordeals before I could overcome it.'

A future biographer with psychological insight will find in this episode and Gandhi's comments on it a fruitful clue to a deeper understanding of the Mahatma's complex and baffling personality.

Destiny Beckons

MOHAN'S FATHER died in 1885. Two years later he matriculated from the high school and entered a college in the nearby state of Bhavnagar, as Rajkot had no college in those days. He found the studies tedious, the English medium difficult and the atmosphere uncongenial. A friend of the family suggested that if he hoped to take his father's place in the State service he had better become a barrister in England. Mohan jumped at the idea.

A restlessness now seized him. His heart was set on going to England. Destiny was beckoning—although he had as yet little awareness of it. But how to raise the money for expenses? The family finances were in poor state. Mohan approached the British Political Agent and the Thakur Saheb of Rajkot for a scholarship but failed to persuade them. Undeterred by rebuffs and hurdles, he persisted in his efforts. Finally a loan was raised. The mother was unwilling to part with her darling boy and afraid to let him loose in a strange, unholy land where he would be beset by temptations. It needed all the cajoling Mohan was capable of and his solemn vow not to touch wine, woman and meat before the mother's objection could be overcome.

At last he left for Bombay to take the boat to London. In Bombay he had one more hurdle—the age-old prejudice of his caste-folk against crossing the ocean which was looked upon with dread as pollution by 'black waters'. They threatened to outcaste him if he persisted in his profane design. But Mohan was adamant. Caste or no caste, he must proceed abroad. He was excommunicated by the caste tribunal. Undeterred, he sailed on 4 September 1888 for Southampton.

He was then eighteen. A little earlier Kasturbai had borne him a son.

In the Diary which he began to keep on board the ship—in English—he has described with touching candour and naiveté the difficulties and humiliation he had to go through and says: 'I must write that had it been some other man in the same position which I was in, I dare say he would not have been able to see England. The difficulties which I had to withstand have made England dearer to me than she would have been.'

Had Mohan been brought up in a Western-oriented Hindu family of Bombay or Calcutta, his passionate urge to proceed to England for higher education would not appear extraordinary. But considering his upbringing and early education in what was little better than a cultural backwater as also the fact of his deep attachment to his mother whose pet he was, this passionate urge could only be explained as the inner prodding of his destiny which the honest lad interpreted as legitimate ambition for a prosperous material career in the interest of his family. Three years later, on the eve of his departure from England, when a representative of *The Vegetarian* asked him what had induced him to come to England and adopt the legal profession, he replied: 'In a word, ambition . . . I thought to myself, if I go to England, not only shall I become a barrister (of whom I used to think a great deal), but I shall be able to see England, the land of philosophers and poets, the very centre of civilization.'

The first few days in London were miserable. 'I would continually think of my home and country . . . Everything was strange—the people, their ways and even their dwellings. I was a complete novice in the matter of English etiquette, and continually had to be on my guard. There was the additional inconvenience of the vegetarian vow. Even the dishes that I could eat were tasteless and insipid.'

The food difficulty was solved when one day he found a vegetarian restaurant in Farringdon Street. 'The sight of it filled me with the same joy that a child feels on getting a thing after its own heart.' Having had his fill of the first satisfactory meal in London, he also bought a copy of Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism*. Reading it he was more than delighted. He was elated. It was the first revolutionary mental stimulus of his life, independently received and consciously registered. Hitherto he had been a vegetarian by habit and because of the vow he had taken to please his mother. From now on he became a vegetarian by conviction.

He read many more books on dietetic research and was thrilled to discover modern science confirm the practice of his forefathers. To spread vegetarianism became henceforth his mission, as he put it. This was the beginning of his missionary zeal as a diet-faddist which he remained all his life.

The glamour of English life was strong on him during the early period of his stay and he went through a phase which he has described as aping the English gentleman. He got new clothes made, bought a silk hat, spent ten pounds on an evening dress made in Bond Street, and flaunted a double watch-chain of gold. He took lessons in elocution and French, and spent three guineas to learn ballroom dancing. But it did not take him very long to realize—and here is foreshadowed the real Gandhi—that if he could not become a gentleman by virtue of his character, the ambition was not worth cherishing.

Meanwhile his vegetarian contacts had expanded, and so had his reading. He came under the influence of the writings of Edward Carpenter, Edward Maitland and Anna Kingsford, and was introduced to the theosophical thought of Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant. All his life he retained a soft corner for idealists and cranks, and was never averse to experimenting with new fads, always the wiser for his experience, though occasionally he burnt his fingers.

It was through his theosophist contacts that he came to know the Bhagavad Gita in Edwin Arnold's English rendering. 'It opened to me a new view of life . . . I had found at last, as I believed, the light I needed.' He also read Edwin Arnold's rendering of the Buddha's life—*The Light of Asia*—as well as the chapter on the Prophet of Islam in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*. About the same time a Christian friend whom he had known in a vegetarian boarding house introduced him to the Bible. He immediately fell in love with the Sermon on the Mount. 'My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the Gita, *The Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.'

Reverence for all religions, the desire to understand the best in each and an almost intuitive realization of the essential unity of them all were thus planted in his mind early in life. It is significant that an awareness and understanding of the heritage of his own land and religion came to him in England and through the English language. Even his vegetarianism was transformed from an observance into a faith under this new intellectual and moral impact. He did not forget this debt to the English people and their heritage of thought even when he had become the grand rebel against the British Empire.

It is a pity that the Diary which he kept in London is lost or destroyed except for a few pages which were fortuitously copied out. From them one can see how scrupulously, almost naively, he put down his experiences and thoughts and how steadily he was acquiring command over the difficult English medium which had been his despair when he first joined the college at Bhavnagar. It is even a greater pity that the long weekly letters which he addressed to his brother in Rajkot and in which he could express himself more freely and fully in his mother tongue are lost to posterity. They would have provided an invaluable record of his day-to-day activities and thoughts in the most impressionable period of his life in London.

That these letters were a truthful and elaborate record of whatever he did and thought is evident from a letter he wrote to his son Manilal's wife from Yeravda Jail in 1932: 'You are a lazy girl, so that your letter of two pages appeared long to you, though it seems very short to me. When I was in England, I filled up 20 to 25 sheets in a single letter to my brother and yet felt that it was not long enough. I never imagined that my brother would think it too long and hard to read; indeed I was sure he would like it. You can fill any number of pages if you write about what you have done during the week, the people whom you have seen, the books you have read and the mistakes you have committed. And when you write to a brother, you put all that into the letter.'

When more than three decades later he began to recall his student days in England, he did so as a man of God, a Mahatma, whose past had ceased to have any meaning for him except where it was relevant to his moral and spiritual evolution, or, as he put it, to the story of his experiments with truth. He therefore recalled only such incidents and experiences as seemed to him relevant or significant in that respect. But in fact his interests and experiences in London as a youth must have been vastly more varied. There is no doubt that the callow youngster who had landed at Southampton in white flannels had considerably matured and come to have a mind of his own during the three fruitful years he spent in London. This maturity could hardly have come merely by reading a few law books or religious texts and attending meetings of the Vegetarian Society.

Fortunately, he looked upon vegetarianism as an experiment with truth and has preserved for posterity the memory of his association with the London Vegetarians. It was at one of the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Vegetarian Society that he showed that he was acquiring a mind of his own. A motion had been moved to expel a member who believed in birth control and openly propagated it. The question deeply interested Gandhi, for, although he was personally opposed to birth control on moral grounds (he remained so till the end), he felt that its advocacy did not violate the principle of vegetarianism as such and was therefore not a fair ground for expelling a member. He accordingly opposed the motion.

The sequel, too, has an interest of its own. He had taken pains to set down in writing his argument 'that any vegetarian could be a member of the Society irrespective of his views on other morals', but as he rose to read it his courage failed him. The paper had to be read by someone else. Young Gandhi lost the day and the member advocating birth control was duly expelled. 'Thus in the very first battle of the kind I found myself siding with the losing party. But I had comfort in the thought that the cause was right.'

But although he was steadily acquiring a mind of his own, he had not yet got rid of his innate shyness and diffidence. This was not the first occasion when his nervousness got the better of him. Earlier, on the eve of his departure for England, the High School in his home town had arranged a send-off in his honour. Mohan had taken the precaution of writing out a few words of thanks. 'But I could scarcely stammer them out. I remember how my whole frame shook as I stood up to read them.'

The discomfiture was repeated later, at a Conference on Vegetarianism at Ventnor which he attended in May 1891 with his friend Mazmudar. He had prepared a speech to read. But when he stood up, 'My vision became blurred and I trembled, though the speech hardly covered a sheet of foolscap.' The speech had to be read out by Mazmudar. 'This shyness I retained throughout my stay in England. Even when I paid a social call the presence of half a dozen or more people would strike me dumb.'

While the spoken word still presented a formidable hurdle in public, the command over the written word was more easily acquired. When he had first joined the College at Bhavnagar he was unable to follow the lectures in English. Now he was contributing articles to *The Vegetarian* on the food habits, customs and festivals of his people at home. These adolescent essays in journalism, simple, straightforward and unaffected, make interesting reading even today. They bear witness to Mohan's power of observation as a young boy and are the earliest intimation of his future lifelong role as a journalist.

His scrupulous regard for facts, a flair for polemic, his capacity for incisive argument and an inveterate inclination to moralize are already in evidence, albeit in an undeveloped and naive form.

Refuting the common supposition that the Hindus are physically weak because of their vegetarian diet, he ascribes their weak constitution to 'the wretched custom of infant marriages and its attendant evils'. He draws on his own experience and argues: 'Suppose a boy of eleven is married to a girl of about the same age. Thus at a time when the boy should be, and is, ignorant of what it is to be husband, he has a wife forced on him. He is, of course, attending his school. In addition to the drudgery at school he has his child-wife to look after... Will not the mere knowledge of his duty prey upon his mind and thus undermine his health?'

He also recalled for the benefit of the readers of *The Vegetarian* the conflict of emotions which had raged within him when he was about to leave his home for the voyage to London: 'Sleeping, waking, drinking, eating, walking, running, reading, I was dreaming and thinking of England and what I would do on that momentous day. At last the day came. On the one hand, my mother was hiding her eyes, full of tears, in her hands, but the sobbing was clearly heard. On the other, I was placed among a circle of some fifty friends. "If I wept they would think me too weak; perhaps they would not allow me to go to England," soliloquized I; therefore I did not weep, even though my heart was breaking. Last, but not least, came the leave-taking with my wife. It would be contrary to custom for me to see or talk to her in the presence of friends. So I had to see her in a separate room. She, of course, had begun sobbing long before. I went to her and stood like a dumb statue for a moment. I kissed her, and she said, "Don't go". What followed I need not describe.'

London was at that period the hub of many new revolutionary ideas and movements, intellectual, political, social and aesthetic.

Whether the budding journalist was in any way affected by them or was even aware of them, is not known. At any rate no impression was left on his mind deep or vivid enough for him to recall when he wrote his memoirs. But he did recall a visit to Paris at the time of the Exhibition in 1890. While he was deeply impressed by the ancient churches and in particular by the Notre Dame, and imagined 'that those who expended millions on such divine cathedrals could not but have the love of God in their hearts', he was unimpressed by the engineering feat of the Eiffel Tower and quoted with approval Tolstoy's comment that the Tower was a monument of man's folly, not of his wisdom. The affinity with the Russian thinker and his abhorrence of the scientific paraphernalia of Western civilization are already discernible.

The three years passed, and having been called to the bar and enrolled in the High Court on 11 June 1891, the young barrister lost no time and sailed for home the following day. His sojourn in England had been both profitable and stimulating, and he had not only enjoyed his stay but the foundations had been laid within him on which he was to build, slowly and laboriously, brick by brick, a personality that seemed later as though hewn out of one piece of rare granite.

Many years later he confessed to Joseph Doke, his first biographer: 'Even now, next to India, I would rather live in London than in any other place in the world.'

Frustration at Home

THE JOY of return home and of reunion with his family was marred by the news that his mother had passed away in his absence. Knowing how Mohan had doted on his mother, his brother had deliberately kept back the news to spare him the shock in a distant land. But though soft-hearted Mohan was never a sentimentalist even as a child, and he bore the loss with dignity.

Before he could rejoin his family in Rajkot his brother took him to Nasik and persuaded him to have a purificatory dip in the sacred river by way of penance for having defied his community's ban on his voyage abroad. On reaching Rajkot a caste dinner had also to be given to propitiate the elders.

Young Gandhi did not believe either in caste bigotry or in meaningless ritual, but he was ready to go a long way to please his elder brother who had done so much for him and had built such high hopes on him. He had to eat many a humble pie in deference to this sentiment, more filial than fraternal, of which the most galling was when he was literally turned out of the house by the British Political Agent in Rajkot with whom he had tried to intercede on behalf of his brother.

His idealism had been earlier restricted to the vow he had made to his mother to refrain from wine, woman and flesh. To this negative imperative had now been added an enthusiasm for food reform and for educating the members of his own and his brother's family into what he then believed was the civilized European manner of eating and dressing. The result was that the household expenses went up.

He knew that his brother had raised a loan and taken the risk of sending him to England in the hope that he would on return build up the family fortune. That this was his life's immediate mission Mohan had no doubt in his mind at that time. Since there was little scope for making a fortune from legal practice at Rajkot, he came over to Bombay to set up as a practising barrister in the great metropolis of western India.

But except for his formal qualification as a barrister of the Inner Temple, he had almost no knowledge of the Indian law nor any other social equipment to help him in the hurly-burly of a competitive career as a lawyer. His moral earnestness was a liability rather than an asset. He declined to subscribe to the prevalent practice of paying commission to touts for bringing clients. The result was that he had to twiddle his thumbs and doze in the court room.

At last a case came his way. He was engaged to defend a petty suit in the Small Causes Court. As he rose to cross-examine the plaintiff's witness, his congenital nervousness overcame him. 'My head was reeling and I felt as though the whole court was doing likewise. I could think of no question to ask.' He sat down in confusion and returned the fee to the client's agent.

He never went to court again, and sought a part-time job as a teacher of English in a school. But here, too, the luck was against him. When the Principal found that the candidate had no university degree, 'he regretfully refused me'.

After a luckless trial of six months in Bombay, young Gandhi wound up his small establishment and returned to Rajkot where with the help of his brother and other contacts he was able to earn a modest income by drafting petitions and memorials. For a barrister to earn a pittance by means of such clerical drudgery was indeed a most frustrating experience.

Whatever hopes his brother and he might have had of receiving State patronage or an appointment at the Court had been dashed to the ground after his unhappy encounter with the British Political Agent to which a reference was made earlier. The humiliation had rankled in the mind. To this was added the general atmosphere of intrigue and corruption in the petty princely states of Kathiawar which he found morally revolting.

And so it was not long before young Gandhi, who had returned from England full of high hopes, found himself not only at a loose end, but disheartened and frustrated. He did not know which way to turn.

In this predicament came a godsend. A Muslim firm of Kathiawar which had large business interests in South Africa offered to send him there for instructing and assisting their counsel in a big lawsuit. The terms were comparatively attractive and the period of engagement was for no more than a year. Thankful for a respite from the humiliating dilemma in which he had been trapped and for a chance to try his luck in the big world outside, Gandhi gladly accepted the offer and made ready to sail for Durban in April 1893.

Destiny in Ambush

GANDHI LITTLE realized what he was letting himself in for and fondly imagined that he was escaping from an unpleasant situation at home and was going to make a little money after all. His main ambition at the time was to make good and retrieve the family fortune. He was totally innocent of destiny's hidden design and the ambush that was being laid for him.

It was in South Africa that this diffident youth, inexperienced and unaided, came into clash with forces that obliged him to tap his hidden reserves of moral strength and turn humiliation and disaster into a creative spiritual experience.

As yet he was very conscious of his social status as a barrister of the Inner Temple of England. It so happened that no first class berth was available in the boat by which he was to sail for Natal. To travel by a lower class seemed *infra dig*. The young barrister made a personal representation to the ship's Chief Officer who sympathized with his predicament and offered him a berth in his own cabin.

Having thus safeguarded his dignity on the voyage, the young barrister landed at Port Natal (also known as Durban) in a frock-coat and turban and was received by his client Abdulla Sheth. It did not take Gandhi long to realize that the dignity which he cherished so dearly would avail him but little in a land which, though a British colony, was obsessed with values which were the very antithesis of what he had learnt to respect as British or Christian culture in England. Providence had lured him to what he was later to describe as 'that God-forsaken Continent where I found my God'.

Although the 'whites', British and Dutch, were altogether a small minority of the population in Natal, as in the other white colonies of South Africa, they treated both native Africans and Indians as less than human. Indians had been originally brought in 1860 at the request of the European settlers to help build their plantation economy. They had been lured as indentured labourers on a five-year contract with the right to stay on as free residents on their own.

In their wake had followed merchants and traders. They were all looked down upon by the whites as pariahs and were contemptuously called coolies or samis, irrespective of their calling or station in life. The whites hated them more than they hated the native negro—partly because they too were 'coloured', but more because, being industrious and thrifty, the whites found their competition, whether in agriculture or trade, too menacing. Years later Lionel Curtis was to admit to Gandhi: 'It is not the vices of Indians that Europeans in this country fear but their virtues.'

All this the young barrister was to discover in course of time. Meanwhile his very first humiliating experience came on the second or third day of his arrival, when his host took him to see the Durban Court. 'The Magistrate kept staring at me and finally asked me to take off my turban. This I refused to do and left the court.' Resenting the insult to his national head-gear, Gandhi wrote to the press about the incident and defended his right to wear the turban in the court. The question was discussed in the papers which described the newcomer as an 'unwelcome visitor'.

Thus the 'unwelcome visitor' achieved a sort of notoriety almost as soon as he arrived in South Africa. It would seem as if destiny had waited long enough and was now impatient to put Gandhi on his mettle without any further ado or camouflage. For events followed in quick succession.

After about a week's stay his client arranged for Gandhi to leave for Pretoria, the capital of the neighbouring Boer Republic of Transvaal, where his presence would be required for the lawsuit. A first class ticket was purchased for him. When the train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about nine in the evening, a white passenger boarding the train objected to the presence in the compartment of a 'coloured' man. A railway official was summoned who ordered Gandhi to shift to the 'van compartment'. On Gandhi's refusal to do so, a constable pushed him out and his luggage was taken charge of by the railway authorities.

It was winter and bitterly cold. Gandhi's overcoat had been taken away with the luggage and he lacked the courage to ask for it. So he sat in the dark waiting-room and shivered the whole night, thinking, 'Should I stand up for my rights or shall I go back to India?'

Years later when the American missionary Dr John Mott visited the Mahatma at his Sevagram ashram in Central India, he asked him: 'What have been the most creative experiences in your life?' Gandhi replied: 'Such experiences are a multitude. But as you put the question to me, I recalled one experience that changed the course of my life.' He then related the Maritzburg incident.

Recalling the dismal scene, Gandhi went on to add: 'Now the creative experience comes there. I was afraid for my very life. I entered the dark waiting-room. There was a white man in the room. I was afraid of him. What was my duty, I asked myself. Should I go back to India, or should I go forward, with God as my helper, and face whatever was in store for me? I decided to stay and suffer. My active non-violence began from that date.'

But more was to come. The next evening he continued the train journey—this time without a mishap. But a bigger mishap lay in wait on the journey from Charlestown to Johannesburg which had to be covered by stage coach. Gandhi was made to sit with the coachman on the box outside, while the white conductor, or 'leader' as he was called, sat inside with the white passengers. Gandhi had pocketed the insult for fear of missing the coach altogether. On the way the 'leader' who wanted a smoke and therefore Gandhi's seat on the box for the purpose, spread a piece of dirty sack-cloth on the foot-board and ordered Gandhi to sit there instead. Gandhi refused. The 'leader', wild with rage, swore vilely and rained blows on the 'coolie', trying to throw him down. Gandhi clung desperately to the brass rails, refusing to yield his seat and refusing also to be provoked to retaliate. Some of the white passengers protested at this cowardly assault, and the 'leader', crestfallen, was obliged to let Gandhi remain where he was.

Thus Gandhi learnt to say No, in the face of danger to his life. Earlier he had learnt to say No, in the face of temptation to his virtue and in loyalty to the vow he had made to his mother. But this was a more dynamic No, which became the rockbed of fearlessness on which all his other virtues were to rest. 'Fearlessness—yes, I would say that fearlessness was his greatest gift,' recalled Nehru more than six decades later, after the Mahatma had passed away; 'and the fact that this weak little bundle of bones was so fearless in every way—physically, mentally—it was a tremendous thing which went to the other people too, and made them less afraid.'

Having seen for himself the plight of his countrymen in that dark continent, one of Gandhi's first acts after he had reached Pretoria and made the necessary contacts with his client's agents, was to call a meeting of the Indian community. 'My speech at this meeting may be said to have been the first public speech in my life.' This time he did not fumble, nor falter nor sit down in shame. He had unconsciously struck the well of courage within him, the perennial well whose waters were never henceforth to fail him.

This speech was memorable in more than one respect. It was remarkable for its total freedom from bitterness and rancour which should, by all normal standards, have rankled in the mind of the young speaker who had been so unjustly subjected to humiliation and violence. Instead, far from ranting against the racial insolence of the white minority, he dwelt on the duties and obligations of the Indian residents. Truthfulness in business, cleanliness in personal habits, the courage to stand by one another and the feeling of being one people, irrespective of one's particular religion, caste or community, were virtues worth cultivating for their own sake anywhere, but their conscious and scrupulous cultivation was particularly incumbent on Indians who were living in another land, because their own country and people would be judged by their conduct.

Gandhi often said in later life that he loved nothing better than being a teacher. No one was too young for him to teach and none too old to learn from him. His teaching was an all-purpose art. He taught, moralized, preached, propagated, incited and disciplined—all simultaneously, in one process. This address to his countrymen in Pretoria was the first public demonstration of his art as a teacher at which he later became adept. Characteristically he wound up his address by advising the audience to organize themselves into an association and to meet regularly to discuss their common problems and to formulate and represent the grievances of their community. He placed his free service at their disposal and offered to teach English to those who might care to learn it.

Gandhi's public life may be said to commence from this meeting. Along with the courage to stand up for his own human dignity had been born a passion to teach others to value theirs, to infect them with his own faith and courage. Almost overnight the shy and timid young man, seeing whom his client in Durban had wondered if his firm had not been ill advised to get him there, was transformed into a leader of men with a passion for public service. The transformation, though sudden, was too radical to be accidental. Destiny had at last revealed its hand.

The position of Indians in the Transvaal was worse than in Natal. They were compelled to pay a poll tax of £3; they could not own land except in a specially allotted location, a kind of ghetto; they had no franchise; and they were not permitted to walk on the pavement or be out of doors after 9 p.m. without a special permit which they had to carry on their person.

One day Gandhi, who had received from the State Attorney a letter authorizing him to be out of doors at all hours, was having his usual evening walk when the guard on duty outside President Kruger's house suddenly and without any warning pushed him off the pavement and kicked him into the street. Mr Coates, an English Quaker who knew Gandhi, happened to pass by and saw the outrage. He advised Gandhi to proceed against the man and offered himself as witness. But Gandhi declined to take advantage of the offer saying that he had made it a rule not to go to court in respect of a personal grievance.

Christian Contacts

Mr Coates was one of the Christian contacts Gandhi had made through Mr Baker who was Abdulla Sheth's attorney in Pretoria. They were all devout and enthusiastic believers who used to take Gandhi to their prayer meetings and would pray for the good of his soul: 'O Lord, show the path to the new brother who has come amongst us. Give him, Lord, the peace that Thou hast given us. May the Lord Jesus who has saved us save him too!' They gave him books to read which Gandhi read conscientiously.

Noticing one day a necklace of *tulasi* beads round Gandhi's neck Mr Coates was shocked. 'This superstition does not become you,' he said. 'Come, let me break the necklace.'

'No, you will not,' said Gandhi. 'It is a sacred gift from my mother.'

'But do you believe in it?'

'I do not know its mysterious significance,' replied Gandhi. 'I do not think I should come to harm if I did not wear it. But I cannot, without sufficient reason, give up a necklace that she put round my neck out of love and in the conviction that it would be conducive to my welfare. When, with the passage of time, it wears away and breaks of its own accord, I shall have no desire to get a new one. But this necklace cannot be broken.'

Indeed, he did not replace it when the necklace wore out.

A Plymouth Brother whom he came to know through Coates tried to tempt him with a ready-made absolution for all transgressions, past and future. 'Sin we must,' he said to Gandhi. 'It is impossible to live in this world sinless. And therefore Jesus suffered and atoned for all the sins of mankind. Only he who accepts His great redemption can have eternal peace.' But for Gandhi this kind of lure had no merit. 'I do not seek redemption from the consequences of my sin,' he replied humbly. 'I seek to be redeemed from sin itself, or rather from the very thought of sin. Until I have attained that end, I shall be content to be restless.'

And restless he remained to the end in search of Truth.

All the same his Christian friendships and his reading of the Bible left a deep impress on his mind. The personality of Jesus in particular held a fascination for him all his life. Many years later when he set up an office in Johannesburg a beautiful head of Christ always adorned the wall over his desk. One day he confided to Mrs Polak: 'I did once seriously think of embracing the Christian faith. The gentle figure of Christ, so patient, so kind, so loving, so full of forgiveness that he taught his followers not to retaliate when abused or struck, but to turn the other cheek—I thought it was a beautiful example of the perfect man.'

'But you did not embrace Christianity, did you?' asked Mrs Polak.

'No,' replied Gandhi thoughtfully. 'I studied your Scriptures for some time and thought earnestly about them. I was tremendously attracted to Christianity; but eventually came to the conclusion that there was nothing really in your Scriptures that we had not got in ours, and that to be a good Hindu also meant that I would be a good Christian. There was no need for me to join your creed to be a believer in the beauty of the teachings of Jesus or to try to follow his example.'

He went on to add, 'If a man reaches the heart of his own religion, he has reached the heart of the others too. There is only one God, but there are many paths to Him.'

Referring to his early Christian contacts, Gandhi noted many years later in his Autobiography: 'Though I took a path my Christian friends had not intended for me, I have remained for ever indebted to them for the religious quest that they awakened in me. I shall always cherish the memory of their contact.'

Some of his Christian admirers, however, never gave up the hope of formally capturing him for their flock. Sometimes when they were unduly persistent or pestering, he chided them for their bigoted zeal, as in his reply to an Indian Christian lady who wrote to him in 1932 (while he was in Yeravda Jail) trying to convince him that Jesus was the only Saviour of the world. 'I admire your zeal,' replied the Mahatma, 'but I cannot congratulate you upon your wisdom. My fortyfive years of prayer and meditation have not only left me without the assurance of the type you credit yourself with, but have left me humbler than ever. The answer to my prayer is clear and emphatic that God is not encased in a safe to be approached only through a little hole bored in it, but that He is open to be approached through billions of openings by those who are humble and pure of heart. I invite you to step down from your pinnacle where you have left room for none but yourself.'

More often he took such importunities in a spirit of kindly and amused good humour. The missionary-anthropologist Verrier Elwin has recorded in his *Leaves from the Jungle* that while Gandhi was convalescing after his release from Yeravda Jail, the mother of Elwin's Poona host, 'who is very old, had been to see Bapu the previous day and had tried to convert him to Christianity. Bapu, beaming all over, took her face between his hands and said, "You sweet little darling wonderful ninety-year-old missionary, if God wants me to walk in your path, He will make me do so."'

Since his student days in London when he first began a conscious study of religion, his own as well as other faiths, Christian, Buddhist and Islamic, Gandhi's basic approach of equal reverence for the best in all of them never underwent a change, though his understanding of them grew deeper with the years. What mattered was the inner spirit which was the same in all; the external form was of little consequence, and may even become a hurdle to leap over which would then become the true test of faith.

This was aptly expressed by him in his characteristic manner in a letter (also written from Yeravda Jail) to Verrier Elwin who had complained that a bishop had called him a traitor to Christ and did not permit him to preach in churches. Gandhi wrote: 'I wish you will not take to heart what the bishop has been saying. Your church is in your heart. Your pulpit is the whole earth. The blue sky is the roof of your church. And what is this Catholicism? It is surely of the heart. The formula has its use. But it is made by man. If I have any right to interpret the message of Jesus as revealed in the gospels, I have no manner of doubt in my mind that it is in the main denied in the churches, whether Roman or English, High or Low. Lazarus has no room in those places. This does not mean that the custodians know that the Man of Sorrows has been banished from the buildings called Houses of God. In my opinion, this excommunication is the surest sign that truth is in you and with you. But my testimony is worth nothing, if when you are alone with your Maker, you do not hear His voice saying, "Thou art on the right path." That is the unfailing test and no other.'

Towards his own religion Gandhi was even more adamant in his rejection of many of its dogmas. 'My belief in the Hindu scripture,' he wrote in 1921, 'does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired. I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or to moral sense.' In this respect one might recall that Gandhi's predecessor, Rammohun Roy, who too combined in his own fashion extreme tolerance with extreme non-conformism, used to quote with approval an utterance attributed to the ancient Hindu sage Vasistha: 'If a child says something reasonable, it should be accepted, but if Brahma Himself says something unreasonable, it should be discarded as a piece of straw.'

Lawyer and Patriot

GANDHI WOULD not have been Gandhi if he had allowed his passion for reforming others or his interest in religious discourse to distract him from the main business which had taken him to Pretoria. His first duty was to his client who had rescued him from his predicament in Rajkot and brought him all the way here.

Neither as a law student in London nor as a briefless barrister in Bombay had Gandhi acquired much knowledge of the intricacies of legal practice. Moreover, he was completely innocent of the mysteries of book-keeping and business accounts which are involved in a complicated lawsuit. So he set himself to acquire both. Being neither a shirker nor afraid of drudgery, it did not take him long to do so. In the process he made two discoveries. One was that facts are three-fourths of the law; the other, that litigation was ruinous to both parties in a suit and therefore the duty of a lawyer was to bring them together in a settlement out of court. In this particular suit which was the first major case of his legal career, the young lawyer succeeded in persuading his client and the opposing party to accept arbitration. 'My joy was boundless. I had learnt the true practice of law. I had learnt to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men's hearts.'

Having completed his work in Pretoria, Gandhi returned to Durban and prepared to sail home. At a farewell party given in his honour by his client he chanced upon a news item in a local journal pertaining to a bill which was before the Natal Legislative Assembly. It was a bill to disfranchise Indians.

Under the existing law there were only 250 Indians qualified to vote as against nearly 10,000 Europeans. The proposed bill was aimed at depriving even this handful of Indians of their electoral rights for which they were otherwise qualified by virtue of the property owned or the taxes paid by them. They were being disqualified because they were Indians.

Gandhi immediately understood the sinister implication of the bill which the others present had neither noticed nor understood. The bill, he told them, 'is the first nail into our coffin'. He advised them strongly to resist its passage by concerted action. But they pleaded their utter helplessness without his guidance and begged of him, in a chorus, as it were, to postpone his departure by at least one month and help organize an opposition to the bill. They were only too eager to pay his fees.

Unable to resist their importunity and realizing that they would be lost without his guidance, Gandhi agreed to stay on for a month, but declined to accept any remuneration for his services. 'There can be no fees for public work. I can stay, if at all, as a servant.' One by one he was working out and laying the guidelines which became not only his own code of public conduct but which inspired and sustained a whole generation of selfless public workers, both there and in India.

He himself little realized that this one month was but a deceptive lure into a lifelong indenture for public service. 'Thus God laid the foundations of my life in South Africa and sowed the seed of the fight for national self-respect,' was how he put it later in retrospect.

Meanwhile, blissfully unconscious of the trap that was being laid for him, Gandhi jumped into the fray forthwith. Without wasting time and energy over preliminary fanfare and bravado, he then and there turned the farewell party into an action committee. Overnight a petition was drafted, copies made and 500 signatures collected. Telegrams were immediately despatched to the Prime Minister and the Assembly Speaker requesting postponement of the bill's consideration pending submission of the petition. The petition received wide publicity in the papers the next morning. The bill was, however, passed.

Undaunted, Gandhi set to work on another petition, this time to Lord Ripon, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies. Ten thousand signatures were obtained within a fortnight and the mammoth petition sent to England. A thousand copies were printed and widely distributed in England and India. The London *Times* upheld the justice of the Indian claim, and for the first time the people in India were made aware of the hardships and ignominy of their countrymen in South Africa.

He followed up this petition by a personal letter to the Indian leader he admired most at that time, Dadabhai Naoroji, who was a member of the British Parliament. 'Mr Escombe, the Attorney-General,' wrote Gandhi, 'has made a report to the effect—if the informant is right—that the only reason for passing the Bill is to prevent the Asiatics from controlling the government of the natives. The real reason, however, is simply this. They want to put the Indians under such disabilities and subject them to such insults that it may not be worth their while to stop in the Colony. Yet, they do not want to dispense with the Indians altogether. They certainly do not want those Indians who come on their own means and they want the indentured Indians very badly; but they would require, if they could, the indentured Indian to return to India after his term of indenture. A perfect leonine partnership ! They know very well that they cannot do this at once—so they have begun with the Franchise Bill. They want to feel the pulse of the Home Government on the question.' Thus, at the very threshold of his public career, Gandhi gave evidence of a native political insight and a shrewd judgement of the opponent's mind. It was this rare combination of political insight, shrewd judgement of men and an unbending idealism that were to make the Mahatma.

It was barely fifteen months since the briefless barrister, disheartened and at a loose end, had left his home in Rajkot. During this brief period the shy and timorous youth, whose

District Library
Nawa Kadal Srinagar

head reeled when he rose to defend a petty suit in a Bombay court and who had allowed himself to be docilely led by his brother, had been transformed into a leader of his people in a distant land, unfamiliar and unfriendly. He had found himself perilously alone, faced with a sinister challenge to the dignity of his spirit. It was this loneliness in peril, the stern choice between facing the worst or slinking away to safety that brought out the man in him. He had passed through fire and emerged cleansed of the dross of fear. Indeed, this became the pattern of all the future crises in his life. Alone and in danger, the best in him came out.

His mind now seemed to have blossomed out, revealing a will dauntless and inflexible, a capacity for judgement independent and sagacious, an untiring zeal for public service and a resourcefulness and flair for organization unsuspected before. It was as if the closed bud of his spirit had unfolded its petals.

The transformation, though by no means instantaneous or accompanied by a sense of mystic exaltation or messianic revelation, as is often claimed for saints and prophets, was nevertheless so remarkable that it is difficult to explain it in terms only of an external impact. It was more like the shell breaking asunder revealing a power that lay coiled up and dormant and which now began to uncoil itself.

Almost all the qualities which in their unique blend made the later Mahatma were now vaguely discernible in the earnest and zealous lawyer-cum-leader, patient and indefatigable, now cajoling, now commanding, drafting petitions and enlisting volunteers. Dimly discernible but not yet revealed. The rehearsal was yet to take place.

In Yoke

THE MONTH by which Gandhi had put off his departure for home was nearing its end. But the Indian community would not let him go. They had seen him in action and savoured his leadership. They could not afford to part with him. They begged him hard to stay and see the campaign to the end, offering to pay what fees he cared to charge.

Though Gandhi would accept no remuneration for his public service, he was practical enough to realize that if he had to extend his stay in South Africa he must be in a position to earn a living from his legal practice. Since it was necessary to live in a style befitting a barrister he could hardly do with less than £300 a year. This modest amount was promptly guaranteed on the spot by a pool of merchants by way of retainers for his legal advice and assistance.

Gandhi had no choice but to agree. He could not desert a cause he had himself, so to say, instigated, nor let down the band of enthusiastic but inexperienced workers he had enlisted and inspired. He was helpless in the face of this moral compulsion. Now, as in future, he felt helpless in this way only when his own conscience was the monitor, nagging, chiding, blackmailing him, as it were. Step by step, destiny had enticed him, now luring, now pushing, until he was securely fastened to the yoke.

Having made the decision, Gandhi applied for admission as an advocate of the Supreme Court of Natal. The Law Society, aghast at the prospect of a black member, opposed the admission. It was an impertinence, without a precedent, for a coolie lawyer to encroach on what had hitherto been a white preserve. Fortunately, the Supreme Court, mindful of the tradition of British Law, did not uphold the objection and Gandhi was duly enrolled. The only concession he had to make was to discard the turban.

'I saw my limitations. The turban that I had insisted on wearing in the District Magistrate's Court I took off in obedience to the order of the Supreme Court. Not that if I had resisted the order the resistance could not have been justified. But I wanted to reserve my strength for fighting bigger battles.'

A bigger battle was indeed not far off. He could see it coming. Forces had to be recruited and trained. He now set about welding the amorphous, heterogenous Indian community into a disciplined, well-knit organization. 'Practice as a lawyer was and remained for me a subordinate occupation.' He named the new organization Natal Indian Congress, in deference to the parent body in his home country, the Indian National Congress, over the Lahore session of which his hero Dadabhai Naoroji had presided the same year.

It was lucky that Gandhi knew nothing of the parent organization save its name. He was therefore able to plan the constitution and working of the Natal Indian Congress in his own way, so as to shape it into an active organization capable of functioning effectively from day to day. He thus made it an instrument far more effective than was the Indian National Congress until Gandhi himself took charge of it years later. He looked into every detail of the organization and himself framed the Committee Rules, two of which are interesting to recall: no member was to address another without using the word Mr and no one was permitted to smoke.

The Natal Indian Congress thus formed, with a paying membership, was inevitably restricted to the comparatively well-to-do middle class Indian residents of Natal—merchants, clerks and the colonial-born free Indians. The indentured labour, which formed the bulk of the Indian community, were outside its pale. They were too poor, ignorant and isolated to know of its existence even. It was Gandhi's humane concern for their welfare and his valiant advocacy of their interests that drew them finally into the fold of the Congress.

'I had put in scarcely three or four months' practice, and the Congress was still in its infancy, when a Tamil man in tattered clothes, head-gear in hand, two front-teeth broken and his mouth bleeding, stood before me trembling and weeping. He had been heavily belaboured by his master.' Gandhi's determined and successful advocacy of Balasundaram's case soon reached the ears of every indentured labourer in Natal, 'and I came to be regarded as their friend. I hailed this connection with delight.'

The fact that Balasundaram had entered his office, 'head-gear in hand', seemed to Gandhi a pathetic reminder of his own earlier humiliation when he was ordered to take off his turban in the Court. The white man bared his head before entering the House of God. No wonder that it gave the white man of Natal an added assurance of his own godliness to make the Indian bare his head in his presence. 'Balasundaram thought that he should follow the practice even with me . . . I felt humiliated and asked him to tie up his scarf. He did so, not without a certain hesitation, but I could perceive the pleasure on his face.'

Recalling the incident the Mahatma reflected sadly: 'It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow-beings.'

Gandhi's petition to the Secretary of State for Colonies bore fruit—at any rate, apparent. The British Government vetoed the Franchise Bill based on racial discrimination against British Indian subjects. But the elation of the Indian community was short-lived. The Natal Government circumvented the Imperial Government's objection by introducing another bill which in effect disfranchised the Indian voter though not ostensibly on racial grounds. Nevertheless, Gandhi's leadership had been vindicated and his campaign had roused the conscience not only of his countrymen in India but of the liberal elements in England.

Meanwhile, not content with disfranchising the Indian voter, the Natal Government imposed a poll tax of £3 a year on all ex-indentured labourers who refused to return home to India, the sinister motive being to force them to submit to renewed indenture. The original intention was to levy a poll tax of £25; this was reduced to £3 to oblige the British Viceroy of India whose consent was necessary. Even then, as Gandhi put it: 'To levy a yearly tax of £12 from a family of four—husband, wife and two children—when the average income of the husband was never more than 14s. a month, was atrocious and unknown anywhere else in the world.'

Here was one more monster to fight. Far from being discouraged, Gandhi's campaign gained in fervour. Petition after petition, letter after letter, poured forth from his pen in a ceaseless torrent that gained increasing momentum. The London *Times* supported his thesis and compared the state of perpetual indenture to a 'state perilously near to slavery'. Gandhi's skill as a crusader was being perfected.

Faith and Fancy

ONE WOULD imagine that what with his professional work—which for a beginner in a hostile environment must have been an uphill climb, his political campaigning, his humanitarian activities and religious discussions, Gandhi had enough to keep his hands full. But Gandhi would not have been what he was had he gone thus far and no farther, ventured this way only and not that. Single-minded in whatever he happened to be engaged in, his interests were many-sided and his curiosity lively. Nothing was too trifling for his whole-hearted attention and nothing so big as to monopolize it to the exclusion of other interests.

Matter-of-fact and practical, a hard bargainer with a shrewd common sense when others' interests had to be protected, he could be naive and credulous in the extreme where his personal faith and fancy were concerned. He lived and experimented at many levels, with cold objectivity and scientific precision at one level, and unquestioning faith at another.

While in Pretoria he had written and published a small *Guide to London*—not for a tourist agency but to provide young men of his country with useful tips on how to live cheaply in London. At that time he fervently believed that Indians who could afford to should go to England for higher education. He continued to believe in England's civilizing mission for a long time.

One of his passions—some have called it a fad—was experimenting in dietetics, in particular with raw or so-called vital foods. Each experiment would be carefully planned, its result watched and noted down, as in a laboratory. Whatever the other benefits of these experiments, his teeth suffered a permanent damage. When his old friend, Millie Graham Polak, visited him at Sabarmati Ashram three years after Gandhi had left South Africa for good, she was shocked to find many of his teeth missing. 'The absence of teeth made a big difference in his appearance', she noted. Gandhi, who had by then come to be called Mahatma, explained that his teeth had gone 'through taking too much acid fruit'.

During the first few years of his stay in South Africa Gandhi maintained a close liaison with the London Vegetarian Society and continued to write for its journal. He had been much impressed by Edward Maitland's *The Perfect Way*. His letterhead bore the inscription: 'Agent for the Esoteric Christian Union and the London Vegetarian Society', and he deemed it his duty to advertise their publications in the Durban journals. His advocacy of vegetarianism in the many articles he wrote was forcefully and cogently reasoned and showed his wide reading of Western literature on the subject.

The irresistible sense of humour which was so marked a characteristic of the later Mahatma had not yet become evident, but now and again flashes of unconscious humour were not lacking, as when in the course of a lengthy letter to the Editor, *Natal Mercury*, he wrote: 'The muscular vegetarians demonstrate the superiority of their diet by pointing out that the peasantry of the world are practically vegetarians, and that the strongest and most useful animal, the horse, is a vegetarian, while the most ferocious and practically useless animal, the lion, is a carnivore.'

Gandhi's crusading zeal and journalistic flair of this stage are seen at their best in the long 'Open Letter' which he addressed to members of Natal Legislature and published in the press. After quoting the testimony of many reputed Western authorities on the high level of Indian civilization, he contrasts their admiration with the attitude of the Natal Europeans towards the Indians living in their midst. 'I think it will be readily granted,' he wrote, 'that the Indian is bitterly hated in the colony. The man in the street hates him, curses him, spits upon him, and often pushes him off the footpath. The press cannot find a sufficiently strong word in the best English dictionary to damn him with. Here are a few samples: "The real canker that is eating into the very vitals of the community"; "these parasites"; "wily, wretched, semi-barbarous Asiatics"; "a thing black and lean and a long way from clean, which they call the accursed Hindoo"; "he is chock-full of vice, and he lives upon rice . . . I heartily cuss the Hindoo"; "squalid coolies; with truthless tongues and artful ways"; . . .'

What is remarkable about this writing is that the author, while quoting all this vile abuse, is himself utterly free from any trace of bitterness or malice, and scrupulously avoids any form of exaggeration.

The Green Pamphlet

For saint and sinner alike, a job well done is an unfailing source of satisfaction. In public as in professional field Gandhi was increasingly making his mark. Not only was his work proving of great value to the Indian community in Natal who now looked up to him for guidance and help in every difficulty, but he could see himself growing inwardly in stature. It did not therefore take him long to be convinced that whatever the future might hold in store, his field of action for some time to come lay in South Africa.

In any case he could not now forsake a cause he had so warmly espoused and of which he was for all practical purposes the chief, if not the sole, protagonist and leader. He was aware of his contribution and yet modest in his estimate of it, proud that he was serving a good cause and humble in his consciousness of being an inadequate instrument. Such remained his characteristic attitude throughout his life.

This was evident in his very first letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, dated 5 July 1894, seeking his help in putting across the Indian case to the British Government and public. In this he first explained the real object of the Franchise Bill, summing up the Natal Europeans' attitude in his lucid and cryptic manner as: ' We do not want the Indians any more here. We want the coolies, but they shall remain slaves here and go back to India as soon as they are free.' He then went on to explain his own part as the spokesman of his countrymen: 'A word for myself and I have done. I am yet inexperienced and young and, therefore, quite liable to make mistakes. The responsibility undertaken is quite out of proportion to my ability. I may mention that I am doing this without any remuneration.

So you will see that I have not taken the matter up, which is beyond my ability, in order to enrich myself at the expense of the Indians. I am the only available person who can handle the question. You will, therefore, oblige me very greatly if you will kindly direct and guide me and make necessary suggestions which shall be received as from a father to his child.'

By now three years had passed. If Gandhi was to make his home in South Africa for an indefinite period he must bring his family from India. He therefore took six months' leave from his colleagues and co-workers to visit his homeland. They begged him to utilize his stay in India to acquaint the people with the grievances of their countrymen in South Africa. In June 1896 he sailed from Durban.

In compliance with his compatriots' request he wrote during the voyage a factual account which he named 'The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa', which was published by him on his arrival home and which came to be known as the Green Pamphlet because of the colour of its cover. Ten thousand copies were printed. Widely publicized and commented on by Indian journals, the first edition was soon sold out and a second one had to be printed.

Gandhi's narration was sober and restrained, free as usual from untruth or hatred or any form of exaggeration. He had said nothing that he had not already said in the 'Open Letter' published much earlier in Durban. He had, in fact, enunciated what became the basic tenet of his political faith all his life in the statement: 'Our method in South Africa is to conquer this hatred by love.' Unfortunately, a garbled and distorted summary cabled by Reuter caused much misunderstanding among the Natal Europeans who were led to believe that they had been unjustly maligned and vilified. This was to have unpleasant consequences later.

Gandhi spent some time in his home town, Rajkot, during which his indefatigable zeal found vent in many activities besides the printing and despatch of the Green Pamphlet. As there was fear of an imminent outbreak of plague, he volunteered his services to the State sanitation department and inspected and advised on the cleanliness of latrines in every street of the town. Sanitation was a subject to which he always attached the utmost importance. A clean latrine made a clean home. This was his test of civilized living. It seemed to many an un-Indian obsession but was in truth a measure of the essential sanity of his human outlook.

He was pleasantly surprised to find that the homes of the 'untouchables', where most of his colleagues on the inspection committee declined to accompany him, were the cleanest amongst all. The filthiest latrines were in the homes of the 'upper ten', in many of which he was rudely refused entry. All this was education for him which stood him in good stead later.

It is interesting to recall that about the same time Gandhi also joined the committee set up to prepare for the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, and taught the British national anthem to the children of his family. Throughout his eventful and unique career Gandhi practised the sublime and the odd with equal zeal.

In obedience to the mandate he had received from his Indian colleagues in Durban, Gandhi visited the major cities in India, met the leaders of public opinion, acquainted them with a first-hand account of the condition of Indians in South Africa, interested the editors of leading journals in the cause and addressed public meetings in Bombay, Poona and Madras. He was much impressed, and not a little overawed, by the personalities of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, then known as the uncrowned king of Bombay, and of Lokamanya Tilak, the learned and fiery patriot. They listened to him with sympathy and gave him encouragement, albeit somewhat condescendingly, as was inevitable under the circumstances. But it was the high-minded and warm-hearted Gokhale who immediately won his heart. 'With him too this was my first meeting, and yet it seemed as though we were renewing an old friendship. Sir Pherozeshah had seemed to me like the Himalaya, the Lokamanya like the ocean. But Gokhale was as the Ganges. One could have a refreshing bath in the holy river.'

It was in a way fortunate that Gandhi had his spiritual crisis and political probation in a far-off 'God-forsaken' land where he had to draw solely on his own inner resources and could be guided by his unfettered intuition and judgement. In India he might have been unduly influenced or inhibited by senior veterans for whom he had—as seems now—a somewhat exaggerated veneration. But in South Africa he stood alone, trudged alone and carried the entire burden on his lone shoulders. This made him. When he finally came to India his ideals had taken a firm root and his strategy had been already tried and vindicated, so that in almost no time he was able to dominate the scene without a serious challenge to his leadership. But that stage was still a long way off.

While Gandhi was in Calcutta where he hoped to address a public meeting he received a cable from Durban that his presence was urgently required there. So he hurried back to Bombay from where he sailed in early December with his wife and children on board the *Courland* which his client-friend Dada Abdulla had recently acquired. It so happened that another boat, also carrying Indian passengers for Natal and the Transvaal, set sail about the same time. Both ships arrived at Durban in the third week of December. They were promptly quarantined.

Ever since the Reuter's garbled version of the Green Pamphlet, the white residents of Durban had foamed with rage at what they thought was Gandhi's deliberate campaign of vilification. More fuel was added to the fire by an unfounded apprehension that Gandhi had brought two shiploads of Indian immigrants. Monster meetings were held where the white speakers threatened to throw all the passengers into the sea if they did not turn back. An inducement was also held out that if they returned to India their return passage might be met.

But no threats nor cajoling had any effect on the passengers who were being constantly cheered and heartened by Gandhi nor on Dada Abdulla & Co., the owners and agents of the ships. Christmas had perforce to be spent on board, and at the dinner given by the captain, Gandhi made a speech on Western civilization 'of which the Natal whites were the fruit'. At the end of twentythree days the ships were permitted to enter the harbour and the passengers disembarked unmolested.

But not Gandhi. Word had been sent to him by the Attorney General that as the whites were inflamed against him in particular, he should disembark later in the day at dusk when he and his family would be escorted. But soon after this message the legal adviser of the Agent Company, Mr Laughton, came up on board and advised that it was neither necessary nor proper that Mr Gandhi should sneak into the city 'like a thief at night'. At his suggestion Mrs Gandhi and children drove in a carriage to the house of a well-to-do friend, Rustomji, while Gandhi and Laughton followed on foot to Rustomji's house which was about two miles away.

It was a brave gesture, but Laughton had unfortunately underrated the menace. As soon as Gandhi had landed ashore he was recognized and in no time a crowd gathered round him, yelling and abusing. Laughton was forcibly dragged away from his side, and a shower of stones, brickbats and rotten eggs fell on Gandhi. His turban was snatched away and he was subjected to blows, buffets and kicks. 'I fainted and caught hold of the front railings of a house and stood there to get my breath. But it was impossible. They came upon me boxing and battering.'

The lynching might have taken a more dreadful turn but for the timely intervention of a brave English lady, the wife of the Police Superintendent, who happened to be passing. She rushed to the victim's side and opened her parasol to ward off the missiles. Meanwhile the news had reached the police and Gandhi was safely escorted to Rustomji's house where first-aid was administered to him.

But the menace was not yet over. The maniac crowd having tasted blood wanted more of it. Deprived of their victim the howling mob surrounded Rustomji's house yelling, 'We must have Gandhi!' The Police Superintendent, unsure of keeping the wild crowd under control for long, sent a frantic message to Gandhi that if Rustomji's house and the lives of the inmates were to be saved, Gandhi must agree to escape from the house in disguise. So Gandhi crept out of the house in the guise of an Indian constable accompanied by two detectives also in disguise.

Recalling this incident later, Gandhi wrote: 'Who can say whether I did so because I saw that my life was in jeopardy or because I did not want to put my friend's life and property or the lives of my wife and children in danger? Who can say for certain that I was right both when I faced the crowd in the first instance bravely, as it was said, and when I escaped from it in disguise?'

News of this cowardly assault received wide publicity and Joseph Chamberlain, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, cabled to Natal authorities to prosecute the miscreants responsible for it. But Gandhi refused to identify his assailants, or be a party to their prosecution, saying that they had been misled and that when they came to know the truth they would be sorry for what they had done.

This was, indeed, what happened. 'The press declared me to be innocent and condemned the mob. Thus the lynching ultimately proved to be a blessing for me, that is, for the cause.' The incipient Mahatma in the 'coolie barrister' was emerging and making himself felt.

The Householder

Having brought his wife and children from India, Gandhi had to set up a proper home. This was the first time in his life that he was going to have an independent household with his own family. His wife must have been overjoyed at the prospect. Ever since their wedding, she had lived in a subordinate capacity, as a daughter-in-law or a younger sister-in-law. Her husband had never earned enough to give her a sense of being the mistress of her home. Now at last she might savour what an Indian wife, or for that matter a wife anywhere in the world, would cherish as her greatest pride and joy.

But the pride and joy which a great many Indian wives have of being undisputed queens in their homes, the husband unwilling or not daring to interfere in the domestic regime, was never to be Kasturbai's. For Gandhi, despite his unworldly aspirations and democratic humility, was somewhat of an autocrat, if not a tyrant, where the personal life not only of himself but of his near and dear ones was concerned. He was the undisputed mentor and infallible guide of all for whose welfare, physical, mental and moral, he held himself responsible. Whatever be his fancies and fads of the time must be accepted and adopted by them—not sullenly but cheerfully.

At this period he was still conscious of his dignity as a barrister and his position as the leader of his community. He was aware that one of the reasons why the Europeans looked down upon his people was the low standard and shabby way of their living. He was therefore particular to set a standard which, while conforming to his simple and vegetarian principles, would not be too much at variance with, or fall below, the average Western mode of living.

Already, on the eve of leaving Rajkot and during the voyage, he had enforced a certain modification in his wife's and children's style of dress and obliged them to wear shoes and stockings. 'It was long before my wife and children could get used to them. The shoes cramped their feet and the stockings stank with perspiration. The toes often got sore.' They were also taught the use of knives and forks. They could hardly use them properly or with ease, and the food never tasted the same as before. But the penance had to be cheerfully borne in the interest of 'civilization'.

The family stayed in a modest but comfortable house in a suburb, furnished unostentatiously in a simple Western style. The table, though strictly vegetarian, was generously maintained, for the guests, both Indian and European, were frequent. There was a cook as well as a general servant. Gandhi also engaged an English governess for the education of his two sons and a nephew who had come with them. He could have got the children admitted to a European school, 'but only as a matter of favour and exception. No other Indian children were allowed to attend them.' Not wishing to be treated as an exception Gandhi preferred to engage an English governess and supplemented her teaching with his own in their Gujarati mother tongue.

But this way of living did not last very long, despite the steady rise in income from his legal practice. The ascetic in Gandhi itched for a simpler life, and the missionary in him longed for more concrete acts of daily service to his fellowmen. One day when a leper came to his door he welcomed him warmly, dressed his wounds and looked after him. Unable to keep him as a permanent inmate of his house he felt ill at ease. Once again the conscience was at him, nagging and putting him to shame.

He longed for an attachment to a hospital where he could actively and regularly help in ministering to the sick. With the help of Dr Booth he succeeded in getting his voluntary service for a couple of hours every morning accepted by a small hospital. This experience stood him in good stead later when he had to nurse the sick and wounded during the Boer War and the so-called Zulu Rebellion.

He also taught himself, with the aid of books, elementary midwifery and care of children, which knowledge came very handy when he had to help in the delivery of his fourth and last son, since professional medical aid was not available in time.

His teaching himself the art of cutting his own hair and laundering shirts and collars had a more amusing consequence. 'I shall never forget the first collar that I washed myself.' He had used more starch than necessary, the iron was not hot enough and was not pressed sufficiently for fear of burning the collar, with the result that when Gandhi went to Court wearing the collar from which the starch kept dropping off, he became the cynosure of many eyes and the butt of much good-humoured ridicule. In course of time, however, he became adept at the job.

But while he took to laundering as a measure of economy, he was provoked to cut his own hair because an English barber had contemptuously declined to cut the hair of 'a coolie'. 'What's wrong with your hair, Gandhi? Rats have been at it?' asked his lawyer friends, shaking with laughter. But Gandhi did not mind, then or later, inviting ridicule if it was brought on by his doing what he thought was right. And self-help was, and became increasingly so, the basic plank of his social philosophy.

Apart from this aspect of self-help being a key-virtue in all circumstances, whatever the price, the episode revealed another significant facet of his mental attitude. Far from blaming the white barber he sympathised with his plight.

'The barber was not at fault in having refused to cut my hair. There was every chance of his losing his custom, if he should serve black men. We do not allow our barbers to serve our untouchable brethren. I got the reward of this in South Africa, not once but many times, and the conviction that it was the punishment for our own sins saved me from becoming angry.'

His own household was expanding, not with added progeny but by his adopting strangers, very often his office clerks, as its members. He treated them all alike, as his own kith and kin. 'I have known no distinction between relatives and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, white and coloured, Hindus and Indians of other faiths, whether Musalmans, Parsis, Christians or Jews.'

Noble as this universal outlook may seem to us as a measure of Gandhi's innate humanism and as a necessary discipline in his evolution as the Mahatma, for the householder's wife it must have been a constant source of irritation. In fact, it did lead on occasion to not a little friction and unpleasantness between the two. Kasturbai was, by all normal standards, a devoted wife and mother, faithful to the tradition of caste and community in which she had been nurtured. She had no aspiration to be anything more than a good wife and mother. She was willing and happy to serve her husband, but she resented his obliging her to clean the chamber-pots of strangers living in the house.

One of them was a Christian clerk of outcaste or 'untouchable' parentage. She found it revolting to clean his pot, but Gandhi was adamant. He could be most unkind to those he loved most or regarded as his own. His own recollection of this episode cannot be bettered.

'Even today I can recall the picture of her chiding me, her eyes red with anger, and pearl-drops streaming down her cheeks, as she descended the ladder, pot in hand. But I was a cruelly kind husband. I regarded myself as her teacher, and so harassed her out of my blind love for her.

'I was far from being satisfied by her merely carrying the pot. I would have her do it cheerfully. So I said, raising my voice: "I will not stand this nonsense in my house."

'The words pierced her like an arrow.

'She shouted back: "Keep your house to yourself and let me go."

'I forgot myself, and the spring of compassion dried up in me. I caught her by the hand, dragged the helpless woman to the gate, which was just opposite the ladder, and proceeded to open it with the intention of pushing her out. The tears were running down her cheeks in torrents, and she cried: "Have you no sense of shame? Must you so far forget yourself? Where am I to go? I have no parents or relatives here to harbour me. Being your wife, you think I must put up with your cuffs and kicks? For Heaven's sake behave yourself, and shut the gate. Let us not be found making scenes like this."

'I put on a brave face, but was really ashamed and shut the gate. If my wife could not leave me, neither could I leave her. We have had numerous bickerings, but the end has always been peace between us. The wife, with her matchless powers of endurance, has always been the victor.'

Boer War

In 1899 the Boer War broke out. Although Gandhi's personal sympathies were with the Boers who were fighting for their independence, he advised the Indian community to support the British cause, on the ground that since they claimed their rights as British subjects it was their duty to defend the Empire when it was threatened. No rights without obligations was his motto throughout his life. He therefore offered the services of an Indian Ambulance Corps of 1,100 volunteers which he organized and trained with the help of Dr Booth.

The Corps under Gandhi's leadership acquitted itself creditably. Though not obliged to, the Corps, after the British disaster at Spion Kop, volunteered to work within the firing line, marching twenty to twentyfive miles a day carrying the wounded on stretchers, among whom were General Woodgate and the son of Lord Roberts. The Corps received an appreciative mention in General Buller's despatch.

The British editor of the *Pretoria News*, who visited the front during the Spion Kop battle, carried away this impression of 'Sergeant-Major Gandhi' at the front: 'After a night's work, which had shattered men with much bigger frames, I came across Gandhi in the early morning sitting by the roadside eating a regulation army biscuit. Every man in Buller's force was dull and depressed, and damnation was invoked on everything. But Gandhi was stoical in his bearing, cheerful and confident in his conversations, and had a kindly eye. He did one good. It was an informal introduction and it led to a friendship. I saw the man and his small undisciplined corps on many a battlefield during the Natal campaign. When succour was to be rendered they were there. Their unassuming dauntlessness cost them many lives and eventually an order was published forbidding them to go into the firing line.'

Gandhi was deeply moved by the heroic suffering of the Boer women in the British concentration camps and was impressed by the reaction on the British public. 'When this cry of anguish reached England,' he recalled later, 'the English people were deeply pained. They were full of admiration for the bravery of the Boers . . . The late Mr Stead publicly prayed and invited others to pray that God might decree the English defeat in the war. This was a wonderful sight. Real suffering bravely borne melts even a heart of stone. Such is the potency of suffering or *tapas*. And there lies the key of Satyagraha.'

In 1901, the war over, Gandhi felt that he must now return to India. The homeland was calling him, and, ever an optimist, he hoped that the Indian community's role in the war would touch the British sense of fair play and help to mitigate the white hostility to Indian residents. He had also a fear that his growing professional success in South Africa might turn him into a 'money-maker'. He had no little difficulty in persuading his friends and co-workers to let him go and had to promise that he would return, should the community need him within a year.

Gifts were showered on him at parting, costly gifts of gold, silver and diamond, including 'a gold necklace worth fifty guineas' for his wife. 'The evening I was presented with the bulk of these things I had a sleepless night. I walked up and down my room deeply agitated, but could find no solution. It was difficult for me to forego gifts worth hundreds, it was more difficult to keep them.'

Finally he decided to make a trust, both of the gifts received now and earlier on the eve of his departure in 1896, to be used for the service of the community. It was not easy to convince his wife of the wisdom or the necessity of such a decision. She complained bitterly that having deprived her of her due he was depriving her future daughters-in-law of theirs.

' "But," I rejoined, "is the necklace given you for your service or for my service?"

' "I agree. But service rendered by you is as good as rendered by me. I have toiled and moiled for you day and night. Is that no service? You forced all and sundry on me, making me weep bitter tears, and I slaved for them!"

'These were pointed thrusts, and some of them went home. But I was determined to return the ornaments. I somehow succeeded in extorting a consent from her . . . I have never since regretted the step, and as the years have gone by, my wife has also seen its wisdom. It has saved us from many temptations.'

Indian Interlude

AMID TEARFUL farewells Gandhi and family sailed for home at the end of 1901. Gandhi reached India in time to attend the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress where he had the satisfaction of seeing his resolution on South Africa pass with acclamation.

He was, however, disappointed with the general atmosphere of the Congress, and felt that the Indian politician talked too much and did too little. He was pained to see blatant evidence of caste snobbery among the delegates. 'If, I said to myself, there was such untouchability between the delegates of the Congress, one could well imagine the extent to which it existed amongst their constituents. I heaved a sigh at the thought.'

He was no less shocked at the insanitation in the camp to which there was 'no limit'. When he drew the attention of the volunteers to the oppressive filth and stink, they replied indifferently that it was not their business, but the scavenger's. 'I asked for a broom. The man stared at me in wonder. I procured one and cleaned the latrine. But that was for myself. The rush was so great, and the latrines so very few, that they needed frequent cleaning; but that was more than I could do. So I had to content myself with ministering to myself. And the others did not seem to mind the stench and the dirt.'

As always, Gandhi was far more concerned with the root causes of moral debility and national helplessness than with making heroic gestures on political platforms. The real Gandhi who had by now emerged within himself, though not yet in the public eye, was neither a saint who had strayed into politics nor a politician who talked religion—much as he might sometimes have appeared either or both—but a very practical reformer and a shrewd observer who could see through many a sham and could smell the stink of corruption through the veneer, however thick and perfumed, of the so-called civilized society.

Gandhi spent about a month in Calcutta as Gokhale's personal guest. Calcutta was then the great metropolis of India, in the cultural no less than in the political sense, and he was naturally keen to see something of the city and meet some of the leading personalities. He had heard of the famous temple of Kali and went to see it, only to be sickened and repelled by the gruesome sight of 'rivers of blood' flowing from the temple where goats were daily sacrificed to appease the deity.

He never forgot the scene and as late as 1932 told his companion-secretary, Mahadev Desai, in the Yeravda Jail: 'There will be many Satyagraha movements even after the attainment of Swaraj. I have often had the idea that after the establishment of Swaraj I should go to Calcutta and try to stop animal sacrifice offered in the name of religion. The goats at Kalighat are worse off even than untouchables. They cannot attack men with their horns. They can never throw up an Ambedkar from their midst. My blood boils when I think of such violence. Why do they not offer tigers instead of goats?'

He was disappointed that he could meet neither Swami Vivekananda nor Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, who were both too unwell to receive visitors. What is surprising is that no one told him that the Maharshi's son Rabindranath was also worth meeting. Gandhi's discovery of this kindred spirit was thereby delayed by nearly fourteen years. He would have been heartened to meet a contemporary who had been equally sickened and repelled by the ghastly ritual of animal sacrifice, at the same Kalighat temple, and that many years earlier.

It was in 1885, two years before the boy Gandhi matriculated from the high school in Rajkot, that Rabindranath was writing his moving novel, *Rajarshi*, to awaken the Hindu conscience against animal sacrifice. This was followed three years later by a powerful play, *Visarjan*, known in English as *Sacrifice*. But at that time the Bengali poet who had already composed many of the songs which were to win for him the Nobel Prize was hardly known outside a limited circle of readers and literary critics many of whom disapproved of him.

On the way home to Rajkot, Gandhi halted at Banaras and some other towns, travelling third class to see for himself and share the hardships of the lowest class passengers. He observed that the extreme discomfort of third class travel in India was due as much to the indifference of the railway authorities as to the dirty habits of the passengers themselves and suggested that educated persons should voluntarily travel third so as to be in a position to reform the people's habits and to ventilate their legitimate grievances. The dispassionate diagnosis as well as the drastic remedy were characteristic of Gandhi's approach to all social and political problems—Do it yourself, and do the best for the least!

He would have liked to settle down at Rajkot and did indeed set up a legal practice there. But he was soon prevailed upon to shift his chambers to Bombay where he would have better opportunities, both as barrister and as public worker. But destiny had other plans. Hardly had Gandhi settled down in a home and begun to feel at ease in his profession when a cablegram from Durban begged him to return without delay and lead an Indian delegation to Joseph Chamberlain who was expected soon. So leaving his family behind Gandhi sailed once again for the fateful land.

Back to the Battlefield

THE DELEGATION to lead which Gandhi had hurried back to Durban bore no fruit. The British Secretary of State was visiting the Colonies, not to listen to the grievances of Indians but to placate the Europeans from whom he hoped to receive a gift of 35 million sterling. But Gandhi was not to be so easily put off. He followed Chamberlain to the Transvaal which was now, after the Boer defeat, a Crown Colony.

He had visited the Transvaal earlier when he had first arrived in South Africa and knew that the condition of Indians under the Boer regime, notorious for its racial arrogance, was worse than in Natal. But now that the Colony was under British administration, he hoped to see the hardships of his countrymen considerably mitigated. The more so as he felt confident that the British could not have forgotten the Indians' voluntary service in the recent war. He was, however, shocked to find that the humiliating restrictions, far from having been relaxed, were in the process of being tightened and made more galling.

He was shocked and pained but not disillusioned. His faith in the British sense of justice and fair play and in the noble and grand design of the Empire was still too firm. The British were sure to make amends, once their eyes were opened to the true state of things. Meanwhile the Indian morale must be maintained and strengthened.

When in response to the urgent call from his community in Durban, he had hurriedly sailed from Bombay at the end of 1902, he had fondly hoped that in a year or so he would be able to return home to his family which he had to leave behind. But as the days passed he could see that the problem instead of easing was getting more difficult, and the area of conflict, too, was widening. The turbid waters of racial discrimination were rising fast, threatening to swamp wholly the honour and security of his people in South Africa. In the face of this menace, how could the pilot forsake the ship?

So Gandhi decided to stick to his post. This time he set up his residence and office in Johannesburg, where he got himself enrolled as an advocate of the Supreme Court. His presence was now more urgently needed in the Transvaal where the conflict was mounting fast. Gandhi always preferred the thick of the battle.

Thus began his third sojourn and crusade in that 'God-forsaken' land where he was to find his God. This time he needed no special persuasion. He was already identified with the cause of his people. Neither did he need the assurance of any retainers. He was well established in the esteem of his community as a competent and conscientious lawyer, and soon he had more work than he was able to cope with single-handed.

His activities in Johannesburg, as earlier in Durban, were many-sided. His main concern was the service of his community—to educate his people in a consciousness of their basic rights, to organize them for concerted action, and to put courage and faith into their cowed and demoralized spirits. The professional work was only the means to keep him going in this mission.

But though his residence and office were in the Transvaal he could not ignore or neglect the interests of the larger Indian community in Natal. The result was that he had now a much larger field to look after than before. The audience he had constantly to address and plead with was not only spread out but highly varied. It included the two white communities, the ruling caste of the British bureaucrats and the sullen and racially arrogant Boers, itching to settle old scores, besides the heterogeneous mass of his own community, ill-knit and ill-organized, with its many layers and many tongues. How was he to maintain a close and continuing contact with so vast and varied an audience?

He was in this dilemma when a proposal was made to him in 1903 for launching a multi-lingual weekly from Durban. He welcomed the proposal, and thus was born *Indian Opinion*, a weekly in four languages—English, Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil. Though neither wholly owned nor formally edited by him, Gandhi bore the main brunt of both editing and financing it.

Like every other activity which he ever took in hand, he took this one also very seriously—not merely the external discipline, code and technique of journalism, but the spirit of its vocation. 'In the very first month of *Indian Opinion*, I realized that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within.'

In the following year, 1904, the Indian location in Johannesburg was afflicted with a sudden outbreak of plague. Called 'location', it was in fact a ghetto where the 'coolies' were huddled together in insanitary surroundings as tenants of the Municipality, having been earlier dispossessed of their ownership of the land. Some of them were working in a gold mine nearby where they caught the black plague from their negro co-workers.

As soon as the news reached Gandhi he got on to his bicycle and rushed to the location where he immediately took charge of the twentythree victims who were segregated in a vacant house of which the lock had to be forced open. With the voluntary assistance of some Indian friends and under the guidance of the kind-hearted Dr Godfrey, all of whom bravely faced the risk, Gandhi nursed the victims day and night. Only two of them could be saved, the rest, along with the good white nurse sent by the Municipality, succumbed to the dread disease.

In a letter to the press Gandhi charged the Municipality with gross negligence and held it responsible for the outbreak of the plague. Gandhi's indictment was unanswerable and was argued with such fairness and courage that it won him the admiration of many white residents in Johannesburg, some of whom became his lifelong friends and collaborators.

One of them was Albert West, a partner in a local printing concern, who was already known to Gandhi, having been a frequenter of the same vegetarian restaurant and a companion in evening walks. When West heard of the plague he immediately offered to help in nursing the patients, but Gandhi, unwilling to expose him to an unnecessary risk, asked him if he would instead go and take charge of *Indian Opinion* in Durban. West agreed and left for Durban the next day. 'From that day until the time I left the shores of South Africa, he remained a partner of my joys and sorrows.'

Personal Quests

ALL THROUGH this period, whatever the demands of his professional and political commitments, Gandhi pursued his personal quests with no less zeal. These quests were of two kinds, one concerned with the inner life of the spirit, the other with the proper care of the body. It would be more correct to say that for Gandhi the quest was one, though it had seemingly two aspects. To act in obedience to the moral law and to live in conformity with the laws of health or nature were, according to him, interlinked as parts of a single quest for truth.

It was his vegetarian quest in London that had first brought him into contact with English Christians, Theosophists and other devout 'cranks'. Since then he had earnestly sought for a rationally justifiable moral basis of social conduct and, along with it, for an intuitively cognizable religious faith. The two, he felt, were vitally linked together as is a mountain stream to a perennial spring or snowtop. For while moral values provide a direction and a standard for conduct, a religious faith is a source of unfailing strength. Thus he believed and thus he sought.

It was through his Christian and Theosophist contacts, first in London and then Durban, that he had been introduced to both the Bible and the Bhagavad Gita. He had been deeply affected by the personality of Jesus and had found in it and in the Sermon on the Mount spiritual inspiration as well as moral guidance.

Now in Johannesburg, as earlier in London, he found the company of Theosophists congenial; their interest in Hindu scriptures and in particular Gita stimulated him to turn to his own religion for a deeper source of strength. The emphasis of Gita on 'non-possession' and 'equability' as prerequisites of the liberated mind made a deep impression on him and set him thinking.

Not long back, during his recent stay in Bombay, he had allowed himself to be persuaded by an American insurance agent to take out a life policy of Rs 10,000. He now wondered if such a calculated safeguard was compatible with faith in God's providence. 'What happened to the families of the numberless poor in the world? Why should I not count myself as one of them?'

For Gandhi to believe was to act. Forthwith he allowed the insurance policy to lapse. His brother was so wroth with him that he practically gave him up and almost stopped all communication with him. No doubt his wife also felt unhappy over what she must have taken as a deliberate disregard of her sons' future. But once Gandhi had made up his mind, nothing was allowed to come in the way.

No less persistent was his concern—some might, and indeed did, call it obsession—with laws of health or living in conformity with nature, as he understood it. This included his love of vegetarianism, his experiments in dietetics, his faith in hip-baths and mud-poultices, as well as his abhorrence of drugs and other allopathic remedies. Kuhne's advocacy of hydropathy and Just's 'Return to Nature' were profound influences on him. During his recent stay in Bombay he had successfully tried Kuhne's treatment on his son Manilal who was seriously ill with typhoid-cum-pneumonia. Later experience only confirmed this faith which remained with him till the end.

It needs to be noted that despite his increasing pride in 'Indianness', the most radical influences on Gandhi's moral and mental outlook were almost all derived from his Western contacts, though these contacts by themselves might not have been characteristically Western. His meticulous regard for hygiene and sanitation, his food habits and dietetic experiments, his insistence on punctuality and his endless curiosity about the why and how of everything could hardly be said to have been inherited from his traditional Hindu background. His moral sensibility and his religious consciousness, too, were at least as much influenced by Jesus, Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau as by Jainism and Gita and the lessons received from his Gujarati jeweller-friend Raychandbhai. Gandhi's adoption in later life of the loin-cloth as dress invested him with an exaggerated Indian-ness which was in a way misleading.

Apart from these influences, Gandhi's personal friendships with Europeans made during his stay in South Africa were deeply cherished by him. They were loyal friends till the end and he both influenced them and learnt from them. His brave role during the plague episode in Johannesburg won him two devoted friends who remained his collaborators throughout the remaining period of his life in South Africa. One was Albert West to whom reference was made earlier and who looked after the *Indian Opinion*. The other was Henry Polak, a young Englishman, who was then serving on the editorial staff of the *Transvaal Critic*.

Polak was so impressed by Gandhi's sober and outspoken criticism of the Municipal authorities that he sought an opportunity to meet him. Since Polak, too, was a vegetarian, an ardent Tolstoyan, and a fervent believer in Just's 'Return to Nature', the two, when they met, immediately took to each other as kinsmen in spirit. It was not long before Polak gave up his connection with the *Transvaal Critic* and joined Gandhi's office as his articled clerk. Throughout Gandhi's career in South Africa since then, he was his right hand, both in professional and in public work. No less, indeed, in food fads and nature-cure experiments.

When Polak's fiancee Millie Graham came over from England, Gandhi was the best man at their wedding, perhaps the first occasion when a dark man was a chief witness at a white wedding—much to the consternation of the Registrar of European marriages. The Polaks were inmates of the Gandhi household and their reminiscences are the most authentic record that we have of Gandhi's daily domestic life of that period and of him as a man, for Millie was a shrewd observer and had a mind of her own.

It was Henry Polak who introduced Gandhi to Ruskin's *Unto This Last* which had so profound an influence on him. Gandhi was journeying to Durban on one of his periodic visits in connection with the *Indian Opinion*, and Polak had accompanied him to the Johannesburg railway station to see him off. At the station he gave him Ruskin's book to read on the way. 'Little did I realize how far-reaching would be the consequences.' Having opened the book, Gandhi could not put it down till he had read it through.

He found some of his deepest convictions reflected in Ruskin's thesis in a form more explicit and more vivid than he had yet been able to formulate for himself. Ruskin had argued that the true wealth of a community lay in the well-being of all its members, the good of the individual being contained in the good of all—'unto this last as unto thee'; that all work had the same value, the barber's no less than the lawyer's; that the life of one who worked with hand, on the soil or at a craft, was the most useful life. Later when Gandhi translated the book into Gujarati he named it *Sarvodaya* (meaning, the welfare of all), a word which has now gained wide currency in India as embodying the Gandhian ideal of socio-economic reconstruction.

By the time the train reached Durban Gandhi had made up his mind to put these principles into practice. He bought a dilapidated farm of 100 acres with a little spring and a few fruit trees on it, and with the help of his friend Albert West and a few co-workers shifted the office of *Indian Opinion*, along with the press, to an improvised shed, and turned the wilderness overgrown with grass and infested with snakes into a colony where all workers were to live by the labour of their hands, each provided with a plot of land and a monthly allowance of £3. The colony which was fourteen miles from Durban and two and a half miles from Phoenix station came to be known as the Phoenix Settlement.

Much as Gandhi yearned to share this life, he had to return to Johannesburg where his presence was needed, as much for public as for professional work. Destiny had marked him out as a fighter and not as a farmer, though in later life he loved to describe himself as a 'farmer and weaver', whenever he was called upon to declare his profession as an accused in a court of law. He had to organize and wield a heterogeneous rabble, luckless and helpless, into an army of resisters, and he needed to earn enough to maintain not only his family but to keep the *Indian Opinion* and the Phoenix Settlement going.

Household in Johannesburg

Now that he was committed to an almost indefinite stay in South Africa, Gandhi had no alternative but to send for his family from India. The Gandhi household in Johannesburg, of which Mr and Mrs Polak were part, was very different from the previous household in Durban when the young barrister was not unmindful of the social dignity of his profession and status.

The Johannesburg house was run on austere lines, with the barest furniture and with no servants. Bread was made at home and wheat was ground by hand, a daily morning ritual at which every male member of the household took his turn. But though austere in living, it was a friendly and joyous household. 'Talk and laughter accompanied the sound of the grinding,' recalls Mrs Polak, 'for in those days laughter came quite easily to the household. Other exercise took the form of skipping at which Mr Gandhi was adept.' Gandhi had now given up the morning breakfast and used to walk the six-mile distance from his house to office, morning and evening.

The experiments in dietetics were endless, for Gandhi and Polak shared a common enthusiasm in this matter, much to the amusement not unmixed with irritation of their wives. For some months no cooking of any kind was done with salt. This was followed by a period of no sugar. 'Then we had a period of nearly all "unfired" food served with olive oil... Food values were most earnestly discussed, and their effect upon the human body and its moral qualities solemnly examined. For a time a dish of raw chopped onions, as a blood purifier, regularly formed part of the dinner meal. Indeed, I was told that so fond of Spanish onions in salad were Mr Gandhi and a few other friends who regularly frequented a vegetarian restaurant in Johannesburg before my advent on the scene that they jestingly formed themselves into the Amalgamated Society of Onion Eaters! Ultimately, Mr Gandhi came to the conclusion that onions were bad for the passions, and so onions were cut out. Milk, too, Mr Gandhi said, affected "passion" side of human life and thereafter milk was abjured likewise.'

As a lawyer Gandhi was held in high esteem by his colleagues as well as by the courts, both for his sound knowledge of law and for his personal integrity. It was well known that he would never utter a falsehood knowingly or defend a client of whose innocence he was not personally convinced. If in the course of the trial he discovered that his client had deceived him, he would then and there throw up his brief, apologize to the court and walk out of the room. 'Every client was forewarned of this, and engaged his services on that understanding.'

Mrs Polak has related the incident of a man charged with stealing who begged Gandhi to defend him. He declared himself innocent but on close interrogation was obliged to admit that he had committed the theft. 'But why did you do it?' asked Gandhi. 'I had to live,' replied the man. 'You had to live?' echoed Gandhi softly. 'Why?' Why should one live, if one cannot live honourably—was Gandhi's attitude in this as in other respects.

'I have often thought of that episode since,' recalls Mrs Polak, 'and Mr Gandhi's "Why?" at the end. It was so indicative of the working of his mind. Why have you to live? What are you contributing to life? were the questions perpetually before him.'

But this comparatively easeful and peaceful interlude of experiments in personal living was short-lived.

Zulu Rebellion and After

In February 1906 the so-called Zulu Rebellion broke out. Gandhi had no illusions about the nature of the conflict which was a man-hunt rather than a military operation proper. His own heart went out to the Zulus, innocent, ill-judged and chased like beasts in their own land. But his sense of loyalty to the British Empire which, he then genuinely believed, 'existed for the welfare of the world', was so strong that what mattered most was not the rightness or wrongness of a particular cause but the interest of the Empire. He, therefore, as in the earlier case of the Boer War, offered the services of his community to form an Indian Ambulance Corps.

Though the offer was accepted by the authorities, the arrogant and graceless temper of the whites was indicated by a correspondent suggesting in the columns of the *Natal Advertiser* that 'Indians, so that they may not run away, should be placed in the front-line, and that then the fight between them and the Natives will be a sight for the gods.' Commenting on this in his *Indian Opinion*, Gandhi characteristically suggested that, 'if such a course were adopted, it would be undoubtedly the very best that could happen to the Indians. If they be cowardly, they will deserve the fate that will overtake them; if they be brave, nothing can be better than for brave men to be in the front-line.'

How heroic the whites were Gandhi saw for himself when with his Ambulance Corps he reached the scene of 'rebellion'. He could see no armed resistance anywhere. It was in fact a no-tax campaign which the rulers, by calling it 'rebellion', felt justified in suppressing with inhuman savagery. What the Ambulance Corps had to carry and tend were not wounded rebels but hunted Zulus, mercilessly flogged, whose lacerated flesh was allowed to fester, as no white nurses were willing to touch them.

As Gandhi recalled, the Medical Officer 'hailed our arrival as a godsend for those innocent people, and he equipped us with bandages, disinfectants, etc., and took us to the improvised hospital. The Zulus were delighted to see us. The white soldiers used to peep through the railings that separated us from them and tried to dissuade us from attending to the wounds. And as we would not heed them, they became enraged and poured unspeakable abuse on the Zulus.'

It was a ghastly, harrowing experience, trudging through a difficult terrain, sometimes forty miles a day, carrying stretchers and following a mounted cavalry, and to see at the end of it peaceful hamlets raided, innocent victims dragged, kicked and flogged. 'But I swallowed the bitter draught, especially as the work of my Corps consisted only in nursing the wounded Zulus.'

The daily spectacle of man's cruelty to man, the arduous marches and the long hours of solitude brought about a crisis in Gandhi's own mind. He had been brooding over the last several years on the meaning and purpose of life and on man's duty in society, and had gradually adapted his mode of living to the ideal of service of his fellowmen. Now in the heat of this painfully vivid experience of human misery what had been slowly incubating burst through the shell of indecision and took shape as a firm resolve.

What he had dimly perceived before he now realized in a flash, namely, that 'I could not live both after the flesh and the spirit'. If his life was to be dedicated to the service of his fellowmen, if spiritual enlightenment was to be the goal of his striving, he must for ever abjure the lust of flesh and observe strict celibacy or what Hindu scriptures called *brahmacharya*. 'So thinking, I became somewhat impatient to take a final vow. The prospect of the vow brought a certain kind of exultation.'

As soon as the 'rebellion' was suppressed and the Corps disbanded, Gandhi hurried to his Phoenix Settlement where he had earlier sent his wife and children to live. He told Kasturbai and his principal colleagues of the travail he had been through and communicated to them the decision he had arrived at. Having thus taken them into his confidence and secured what he believed was their willing approval, he took what he described as 'the plunge—the vow to observe *brahmacharya* for life'.

The Challenge

It was as though he had heard the call to battle and donned the soldier's uniform. Indeed, the battle was about to begin. The challenge had been flung. No sooner were the Zulus suppressed than the Boer-British ruling junta in the Transvaal turned their baleful attention to the Indians. The black and the brown must be kept in their places and in no wise permitted to come in the way of the white monopoly of power and trade.

An Ordinance was promulgated in August 1906, restricting the entry of Indians in the Transvaal and making it obligatory for every Indian, man, woman and child (of 8 years and above) to register and give their thumb and finger impressions. Failure to possess a registration card was punishable with fine, imprisonment or expulsion, and the police were authorized to enter private premises or hold up any individual in the street to inspect the registration card.

Gandhi, who had been frantically called back to Johannesburg, advised his compatriots to resist what he described as the Black Ordinance, if the Indian community was not to be wiped off in disgrace. A mass meeting was held where the Indians proclaimed their determination never to submit to this 'dog's collar'. Gandhi told the audience: 'There is only one course open to me, namely, to die, but not to submit to the law, even if everyone else were to hold back, leaving me alone.'

What form the resistance was to take was not yet clear to anyone. Not even to Gandhi to whom all looked up for guidance. The first step, however, was clear—a step which Gandhi never skipped in all his future struggles—namely, to meet and negotiate with the opponent and give him every chance to be reasonable. So he approached and pleaded with the Transvaal authorities but could not succeed beyond getting the clause relating to women deleted. With regard to the rest the authorities were unyielding.

Since the Transvaal was yet a Crown Colony and the Black Act could not become law without the assent of the British Crown, Gandhi accompanied by another delegate sailed for London in early October to impress on the British Government the un-Imperial character of a measure which discriminated against His Majesty's British Indian subjects. At that time and for many years after Gandhi was a fervent believer that the British Empire was an almost divinely ordained institution for the good of mankind.

In 1897, shortly after he had been lynched by the whites after his return to Durban from India, he had sent on behalf of his community an address to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee, saying, 'we are proud to think that we are your subjects'; and on the Queen's death in 1901 he had sent a cable to the royal family 'bewailing the Empire's loss in the death of the greatest and most loved sovereign on earth'. After the British victory in the Boer war he had, at a public meeting in Durban, moved a resolution congratulating the British generals, in the course of which he stated: 'It was the Indians' proudest boast that they were British subjects.'

But beyond a certain expression of polite lip sympathy, this loyal subject so proud of the British Empire could achieve little in England. The Liberal Government in Great Britain made an empty gesture of withholding the Crown's consent to the Bill, knowing well that in a few days the Transvaal would become a self-governing colony when the same Bill would be passed by its legislature. And so it happened. One of the first Acts of the new Parliament of the Transvaal was to rush through the Black Bill at a single sitting which became law by receiving the royal assent in May 1907.

Gandhi met the challenge by organizing a Passive Resistance Association pledged to defy the new law. Pickets were recruited and trained who went from house to house explaining the meaning of the 'dog's collar'. Registration centres opened by the Government were picketed peacefully and posters were displayed all over the city: 'Loyalty to the King demands loyalty to the King of Kings! Indians, be free!' The result was that hardly 5 per cent among the Indians registered, although the authorities went on extending the last date.

Fine, cancellation of trading licences, imprisonment and even deportation were resorted to, but still the Indians refused to register. Irritated and at his wit's end, General Smuts ordered the arrest of Gandhi and some of his principal assistants. On 10 January 1908 Gandhi was tried in the same court where he had been a familiar figure as attorney and barrister. He pleaded guilty and asked the trying magistrate for the highest penalty under the law. He was sentenced to two months' simple imprisonment and was kept in Johannesburg Jail.

Gandhi had named his campaign passive resistance. Later when he came across Thoreau's famous essay on Civil Disobedience by which he was deeply impressed and parts of which he translated into Gujarati and published in *Indian Opinion*, he began to refer to his movement as civil disobedience. But as neither term, passive resistance or civil disobedience, satisfied him, he adopted the phrase civil resistance.

Still he was not satisfied. It seemed to him that none of these phrases adequately conveyed the full significance of the struggle he had in mind. The resistance he envisaged was based on a positive concept of love and truthfulness. He would also have preferred a term of Indian origin. So when some one suggested *sadagraha* (*lit*. holding fast to what is right), he pounced on it, changing it to *satyagraha* (*lit*. holding fast to truth) which he thought expressed more fully the moral inspiration behind the concept.

A Test of Faith

GANDHI'S ARREST and imprisonment infused courage into others and was followed by many more joining him. This brave defiance of authority by a handful of 'coolies' hitherto despised as cowardly and cringing roused not a little admiration and sympathy and there were public protests in India as well as in England. The situation was becoming uncomfortable for General Smuts who in less than three weeks sent an emissary to Gandhi in jail. He chose as emissary Albert Cartwright, an English journalist friendly to Gandhi and sympathetic to the Indian cause.

Cartwright brought a draft from Smuts which proposed in effect that if the Indians registered voluntarily, the Registration Act which was resented as degrading by Indians would be repealed. The Indians had earlier declared at a public meeting that they did not object to voluntary registration to help the authorities keep a check on unauthorized immigration. So the draft as presented by Cartwright seemed reasonable to Gandhi with some minor modifications proposed by him. The agreement was confirmed in person by Smuts when Gandhi was taken to Pretoria, still in convict's dress, to see him on 30 January — a fateful day in Gandhi's life.

The understanding was verbal as between two men of honour. Gandhi trusted Smuts's word, as he continued to trust his opponent's all his life, despite many a disappointment. Returning to Johannesburg the same evening, he called a meeting of Indians at night and told them of what had happened. 'We must register voluntarily,' he said, 'to show that we do not intend to bring a single Indian into the Transvaal surreptitiously or by fraud.'

Among his audience were a number of Pathans from the north-west frontier of India, a robust, unsophisticated people known for their rugged honesty and a sense of honour easily inflammable. To them the distinction between 'voluntary' and 'compulsory' meant little; what mattered was that at earlier meetings they had been made to swear that they shall not submit to the degradation of giving their finger-prints. One of them even bluntly charged Gandhi with having been bribed by Smuts to betray his people and declared solemnly: 'I swear with Allah as my witness that I will kill the man who takes the lead in applying for registration.'

But Gandhi was not to be cowed by threats of death. The reply that rose to his lips on the spur of the moment was so characteristic of him that he repeated it forty years later and in between on many an occasion. It was an agonized conviction that proved prophetic. 'To die by the hand of a brother, rather than by disease or in such other way, cannot be for me a matter of sorrow,' said Gandhi. 'And if even in such a case I am free from the thoughts of anger or hatred against my assailant, I know that will redound to my eternal welfare, and even the assailant will later on realize my perfect innocence.'

But the Pathans were not impressed by a sentiment so obviously Buddhist-Christian. A few days later, when Gandhi was on his way to be the first to register voluntarily, as he had promised to do, he was accosted by a former Pathan client of his, by name Mir Alam, who and his associates fell upon him injuring him grievously. Had not some European passers-by rushed to his rescue, the result might have been fatal. Gandhi, who lay bleeding and unconscious on the pavement, was carried to a neighbouring office where immediate first-aid was administered. Luckily, his friend, the Baptist Minister Joseph Doke, arrived on the scene and took him to his house where he convalesced for several days under proper surgical care.

Almost the first thing Gandhi did on regaining consciousness was to plead that his assailant was not to blame and should not be prosecuted. As soon as the cuts in his cheek and upper lip were stitched and the face and head bandaged, he insisted on sending for the Registrar and giving his finger-prints, despite the doctor's injunction to take absolute rest and not to speak. But Gandhi was adamant, saying that he was pledged to take out the first registration certificate and must do so at any cost. And so it was done—to his satisfaction and to every one else's dismay, including the white Registrar's whose eyes were moist as he took the finger-prints.

Doke had first seen Gandhi a few months earlier, in 1907, when having read of the Passive Resistance movement of the Indians he had asked for an interview with their leader. He had expected to meet 'a tall and stately figure, and a bold, masterful face, in harmony with the influence he seemed to exert in Johannesburg. Instead of this, to my surprise, a small, lithe, spare figure stood before me, and a refined, earnest face looked into mine. The skin was dark, the eyes dark, but the smile which lighted the face, and that direct fearless glance, simply took one's heart by storm.'

Since then Doke was his warm admirer and friend, and became Gandhi's first biographer. His little biography published in 1909 is still one of the best accounts of Gandhi's personality and life (till then), and helped Tolstoy to understand better the background of Gandhi's life and upbringing and the work he was doing in South Africa. 'Therefore, your activity in the Transvaal,' wrote the aged Tolstoy to Gandhi in September 1910, shortly before his death, 'as it seems to us, at this end of the world, is the most essential work, the most important of all the work now being done in the world, wherein not only the nations of the Christian, but of all the world, will unavoidably take part.'

Years later, Doke's daughter recalled the vivid impression she had retained of the wonderful Indian guest, his face swathed in bandages, who used to ask her, then a little girl, to sing for him *Lead Kindly Light*, and how one day her brother had to go, spade in hand, to bring him fresh, clean earth dug from the garden, for Gandhi was fed up with the doctor's treatment and insisted on having the bandages removed and a mud poultice applied instead. 'Well do we remember,' added the brother, 'the consternation of the doctor when he found what had been done. He threatened to wipe his hands of responsibility for his patient — but in two days Mr Gandhi was sitting out on the verandah in the study arm-chair and eating fruit. We have that chair in our home now, and we always call it Mahatma Gandhi's chair.'

In a few days Gandhi was well enough to shift to Polak's home in a suburb where he completed his convalescence under Mrs Polak's care. (Mrs Gandhi and the children had been sent earlier to Phoenix.) According to Mrs Polak, it was during this period of convalescence that Gandhi 'developed the power which he afterwards retained, of being able to fall asleep while at work just where he sat, and after a very few moments to awaken refreshed and without any break in his continuity of thought. I have sat in the room while he has been dictating to his secretary, who had come up from the office for this purpose, and quite suddenly the voice ceased and the eyes closed. The secretary and I would sit still, then equally suddenly Mr Gandhi's eyes would open again and the voice would continue dictating from the very point where it had stopped. I never remember his asking, Where was I? or What was I saying?'

Through the Fire

As soon as he was well enough Gandhi plunged again into the vortex of his public activities, now in Durban, now in Johannesburg, calling on his compatriots to honour the pledge of voluntary registration. But a bitter disappointment awaited him. Smuts, instead of keeping his word to repeal the Black Act, introduced in addition another Bill validating the voluntary registrations. When reminded of his pledge, he denied that he had made any.

Gandhi, to whom a word pledged meant more than his life, was deeply shocked and grieved that a brave soldier like Smuts should have so demeaned himself. But instead of vilifying his opponent—a thing he never did—he called a mass meeting of his countrymen where in a giant cauldron he publicly consigned to flames his own registration certificate he had taken out at no little risk to his life. His gesture was followed by hundreds of other certificates being thrown into the cauldron.

Mir Alam, his erstwhile Pathan assailant, was present at this meeting, having served his sentence in jail for assault—Gandhi's appeal for his exoneration having proved of no avail. He now understood that he had misjudged his victim. Pathans are as generous as they are impetuous, and Mir Alam readily came up to Gandhi, warmly shaking his hand by way of apology.

The dramatic gesture of a public bonfire of the hated 'dog's collar' must have left a lasting impression on Gandhi himself, for more than a decade later when he led the first mass civil disobedience campaign against the British Government in India, bonfire of foreign cloth was one of the major symbolic acts of his campaign. So was *Hartal*, or voluntary suspension of all public business and activity, which, too, he organized now for the first time as a mark of respect to all the Indians who had been jailed for hawking goods without a licence. Indeed, almost every strategy of non-violent mass civil disobedience which he later perfected and applied on a much vaster scale in India was first devised, tested and rehearsed by him in the South African laboratory.

The Government retaliated with mass arrests, fines, confiscation of goods and deportations, but mostly of the small fry. Gandhi, unhappy at being left at large, wrote to Smuts: 'Is it courageous to leave me alone and to harass poor Indians?' At last the authorities were stung into arresting him at the end of September, and he was sentenced to two months' hard labour. And so once again he was lodged, to use his words, in His Majesty's Hotel—'the happiest man in the Transvaal'.

This time the authorities tried to break his and his companions' spirits by subjecting them, like slaves under the lash, to conditions brutal and degrading. Recalling his experiences and contrasting them with the comparatively easy conditions in the Yeravda Jail in Poona where he was in 1932, he told his companion-secretary Mahadev Desai: 'It was in South Africa that we suffered real imprisonment. We were abused and beaten, not by the prison staff but by Zulu prisoners with whom we were kept.' The sanitary conveniences were of the crudest and without any privacy. 'One day I was uneasily seated when a Zulu prisoner came and pushed me with a slap. I fell and collided against a wall. It was sheer good luck that my head was not broken or I would have bled profusely... My cell was hardly three or four feet broad and six feet long with no light at all and only a window near the roof for ventilation. Such cells were called isolation cells. I was surrounded by the worst type of criminals. One of these had thirty convictions to his credit...'

In between, when his presence was required in the court as a witness, he was brought hand-cuffed and in convict dress.

But Gandhi's spirit instead of flagging was steeled by hardship, and he continued the campaign after his release until he was jailed a third time in February 1909, again with hard labour. He spent the brief respite between the two imprisonments at Phoenix, nursing his wife, who was dangerously ill with pernicious anaemia. By careful nursing, drastic dieting and hydropathy he succeeded in restoring her to normal health, to the surprise and admiration of the doctors who had almost given up hope.

He was in Volksrust Gaol when he received news of his wife's serious illness in November 1908. He could have obtained release by paying the fine but as that would have been against the self-imposed code of a satyagrahi, he resisted the temptation. In a touching letter addressed to her as 'Beloved Kastur', he wrote (in Gujarati): 'I have received Mr West's telegram today about your illness. It cuts my heart. I am very much grieved but I am not in a position to go there to nurse you. I have offered my all to the satyagraha struggle. My coming there is out of the question. I can only come if I pay the fine, which I must not. If you keep courage and take the necessary nutrition, you will recover. If, however, my ill luck so has it that you pass away, I should only say that there would be nothing wrong in your doing so in your separation from me while I am still alive. I love you so dearly that even if you are dead, you will be alive to me. Your soul is deathless. I repeat what I have frequently told you and assure you that if you do succumb to your illness, I will not marry again. Time and again I have told you that you may quietly breathe your last with faith in God. If you die, even that death of yours will be a sacrifice to the cause of satyagraha. My struggle is not merely political. It is religious and therefore quite pure.'

A Mission in London

WHEN HE came out of prison at the end of May, it was decided that he, accompanied by another Indian delegate, should proceed to London where the prospective union of the South African colonies was under consideration of British Parliament and where Generals Botha and Smuts were also expected for negotiations. Gandhi still trusted the British sense of fair play and believed that the Imperial Government could be induced to guarantee justice for His Majesty's Indian subjects in South Africa. The British, however, despite their reputation for political sagacity and far-sightedness were clumsy enough to turn this genuine friend and champion of their Empire into an implacable opponent who succeeded in ending what he could not mend.

Gandhi spent about four months in London, indefatigable as ever, working day and night, interviewing and pleading with politicians and the press for justice to the Indians. But nothing came of it. Some individuals were sympathetic and friendly, but the Government as a whole was politely firm in its non-committal, as usual playing one virtue against another, dodging justice in the name of fair play, and denying equality in the name of democracy. How could the Imperial Government interfere with the self-governing dominions? The British had made up with their erstwhile foes, the Boers. The whites were once again united in defence of their 'civilization'. Who cared for the pariahs of the Empire? This lesson was imperceptibly but relentlessly sinking into Gandhi's mind.

But though the political mission was fruitless, Gandhi received much intellectual and moral stimulus during this peaceful interlude in London, making more active the leaven already working in his mind. He watched with sympathy and admiration the brave struggle of the British suffragettes, not unmixed with sorrow that women should 'copy the evil ways of men' by indulging in violence. He had during the Boer war admired the brave women suffering cheerfully in British concentration camps; now he admired their British sisters' resistance in fearless vindication of their right of equality with men.

He never tired of saying that he had learnt the secret of passive resistance from women. He told Mrs Polak: 'I see that, more and more, women are going to play an important part in the affairs of the world. They will be a great asset to any movement . . . I have learned more of passive resistance, as a weapon of power, from Indian women than from anyone else. Even Ba (Mrs Gandhi) has taught me that I cannot compel her to do anything she absolutely and resolutely refuses to do. She just passively resists me and I am helpless.'

Mrs Polak also happened to be in London during this period and to her feminine eye for the personal, we owe some interesting sidelights on Gandhi's way of life in the British metropolis. He never ceased to be human and warm-hearted, however high he scaled the height of Mahatmahood, but at this time he still relished some good things of life, despite the *brahmacharya* and the Phoenix Settlement. He still enjoyed a good cup of tea and this beverage with buttered toasts and fruits galore were served to the large number of visitors in his room at the Westminster Palace Hotel (no longer there) in Victoria Street where he stayed. He still liked to dress like an English gentleman, and Mrs Polak's vivid memory of the changes in his dress from the time when she first met him to her visit to the Sabarmati Ashram is worth recalling.

'What different phases in Mr Gandhi's mental career had been proclaimed by the clothes he wore! Each costume, I think, denoted an attitude of mind. Yet with what a curious detachment he wore them! Each seemed to be but a fugitive expression of him, and behind it often one sensed a human being, who wore form itself as though he would readily and easily cast it off, and stand naked before his God.

'When I first saw him in South Africa, he wore a black professional turban, an easy lounge suit of a neat patterned material, a faint blue stripe on a darker ground being rather a favourite with him, a stiff collar and tie, with shoes and socks for outdoor wear. When later I met him in London, he looked distinguished in the conventional dress of a pre-War English gentleman—a silk hat, well-cut morning coat, smart shoes and socks; and years afterwards I gave away a number of dress shirts that he had discarded from his wardrobe of this period.

'Then again, in South Africa, he returned to the lounge suit, but now a ready-made, rather sloppy one, shoes more clumsy, and no longer starched collars for ordinary wear. During the latter part of his life there, this gave way to a combination of East and West whenever possible—a pair of trousers accompanying a shirt-like garment, and nearly always sandals.

'Then the final change, a loin-cloth of home-spun material and a shawl to throw round his shoulders when he considered it necessary to do so.'

It was at this time that Gandhi had his first exchange of letters with Leo Tolstoy whom he had long admired for his fearless upholding of the true spirit of religion and whose uncompromising condemnation of modern civilization of the West was to exercise a lasting influence on Gandhi. As he wrote after Tolstoy's death which came not long after: 'Of the late Count Tolstoy we can only write with reverence. He was to us more than one of the greatest men of the age. We have endeavoured, so far as possible, to follow his teaching.'

But the most challenging impact on his mind was his contact and discussions with the young revolutionary-minded Indians living in London, many of whom believed in terrorism as a religious cult almost. A few days before his arrival in London, one of them, Madanlal Dhingra, had shot dead Sir Curzon Wyllie, a British official who had served in India and was then attached as an aide-de-camp to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley. Sir Curzon had been invited to an Indian social gathering where the outrage was committed. An Indian Parsi physician, Dr Lalkaka, who tried to save Sir Curzon was also killed.

Dhingra was unrepentant, and proudly defended his action in the court as inspired by purest patriotism and sanctioned by his religion. Dhingra's intrepid defence ending with his rapturous invocation to God and Mother deeply stirred many of his countrymen, and even Winston Churchill, then Under-secretary for the Colonies, characterized Dhingra's speech in the court as 'the finest ever made in the name of patriotism'.

But Gandhi, unmoved by patriotic hysteria and unafraid of his compatriots' jeers, condemned Dhingra's act, and even went to the extent of saying that Dhingra 'acted like a coward', since to kill an invited guest, in one's own house, without a warning and without giving him a chance to defend himself, was nothing if not a cowardly act. What others admired as Dhingra's heroic courage in having knowingly risked his life in a cause from which he had nothing to gain personally, Gandhi attributed to a state of intoxication. 'It is not merely wine or *bhang* that makes one drunk; a mad idea also can do so.'

Dialogue on the Sea

GANDHI WAS deeply perturbed at the exaltation of terrorism in the name of patriotism and religion which he witnessed among the educated young Indians he met in London. 'I must say that those who believe and argue that such murders may do good to India are ignorant men indeed,' he wrote in his weekly despatch from London to the *Indian Opinion*. 'No act of treachery can ever profit a nation. Even should the British leave in consequence of such murderous acts, who will rule in their place? The only answer is: the murderers. Who will then be happy?... India can gain nothing from the rule of murderers—no matter whether they are black or white.'

This set him pondering the destiny of his country. What was the kind of self-rule or freedom which could bring real well-being and happiness to the vast masses of his countrymen who lived in the villages and were yet untouched by Western civilization? Gandhi shared with Tolstoy and Ruskin an innate aversion to industrial civilization and believed that the ideal society was that where everyone laboured with his hands, on land or at a craft, and lived in obedience to the moral law. The individual conscience would directly apprehend the moral law, if only men extricated themselves from 'the toils of this huge sham of modern civilization' and ceased to exploit their fellow human beings in any form.

He set down his convictions, during the voyage back to Durban, in the form of a Socratic dialogue with the representative patriotic Indian youth he had recently met with in London who believed that any means were justified to throw off the British yoke.

Gandhi's main concern in this 'Dialogue on the Sea' was to disabuse the young patriots of the notion that freedom of India lay in driving out the British rulers from the soil, anyhow and by any means. For that might only result in 'English rule without the Englishman', or in other words, 'the tiger's nature, but not the tiger'. True patriotism consisted not in wanting the reins of government in one's own hands but in working for a society where 'the millions obtain self-rule'. The tyranny of the Indian princes or other bosses could be no better than that of the British. 'By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I should bow down my head to them.'

Democracy, as it has evolved in the West, cannot ensure such a society, for in a democracy it is deemed incumbent on everybody to obey the laws made by the majority. But 'it is a superstition and ungodly thing to believe that an act of majority binds a minority'. A man who has realized his manhood fears only God, and will fear no one else. 'If a man will only realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.' In other words, only that society is free, happy and worth living in where every individual, man or woman, is a potential civil resister. Thus spoke Thoreau through Gandhi.

Tolstoy's influence was no less marked in the uncompromising denunciation of modern civilization with its railways, law courts, doctors, administrators, and its emphasis on knowledge and science in the system of education. Altogether, the thesis put forth by Gandhi in this little book which he published as *Hind Swaraj* (or Indian Home Rule) contains the quintessence of Gandhian thought at its purest, its fiercest and its crudest.

Gandhi's intellectual equipment was essentially forensic. He was not only trained, but was born, an advocate. He gave up practice in the British Court of Law, only to continue it in the larger Court of Universal Law or Justice. Despite his repeated claim, sincerely made, that he sought nothing but truth, he sought it in his own fashion, not in the manner of a judge whose concern was to sift evidence as objectively as possible, but as an advocate already committed to a version or aspect of it. Gandhi made up his mind intuitively and then advocated his conclusion rationally.

This occasionally led to an exaggerated emphasis on this or that aspect of a question, making the argument seem unduly crude or fanatic. This is particularly evident in *Hind Swaraj*, as may be seen from the following statements:

'The condition of England at present is pitiable. I pray to God that India may never be in that plight. That which you consider to be the Mother of Parliaments is like a sterile woman and a prostitute. Both these are harsh terms, but exactly fit the case. That Parliament has not yet, of its own accord, done a single good thing. Hence I have compared it to a sterile woman. The natural condition of that Parliament is such that, without outside pressure, it can do nothing. It is like a prostitute because it is under the control of ministers who change from time to time.'

'It must be manifest to you that, but for the railways, the English could not have such a hold on India as they have. The railways, too, have spread the bubonic plague. Without them, the masses could not move from place to place. They are the carriers of plague germs. Formerly we had natural segregation. Railways have also increased the frequency of famines because, owing to facility of means of locomotion, people sell out their grain and it is sent to the dearest markets. People become careless and so the pressure of famine increases. Railways accentuate the evil nature of man. Bad men fulfil their evil designs with greater rapidity. The holy places of India have become unholy.'

'I have indulged in vice, I contract a disease, a doctor cures me, the odds are that I shall repeat the vice. Had the doctor not intervened, nature would have done its work, and I would have acquired mastery over myself, would have been freed from vice and would have become happy. Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin. Men take less care of their bodies and immorality increases.'

'Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the English gates. Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin.'

'It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth we only waste our money; but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood.'

And so on. Deep intuitive wisdom and shrewd common sense are mixed up with not a little extravagant sophistry. Fortunately, Gandhi was always bigger in life than in word, greater in practice than in precept, infinitely more creative in living than in logic.

Hind Swaraj, originally written and published in Gujarati, was promptly banned by the Bombay Government in India. This provoked the author—fortunately—to publish its English translation, a copy of which he sent to Tolstoy. The aged sage was naturally pleased to see his own reflection in it.

This little classic which Gandhi was impelled to write during his return voyage and which is one of the few complete things he wrote at a stretch, in the white heat of a sustained intellectual urge (most of his other writings were written in instalments to be serialised for his journal), was the only fruitful achievement of his four-month sojourn in England.

Tolstoy Farm

GANDHI'S POLITICAL mission in London proved sterile, the British Government virtuously pleading its helplessness to 'thwart the policy of self-governing colonies of South Africa'. A trying situation awaited him when he landed in South Africa. The prospect was disheartening. The tempo of civil resistance had slowed, the spirit was flagging; the government, on the other hand, taking advantage of the situation had tightened the repressive measures.

Hardly any funds were left to meet the minimum recurring expenses to keep the struggle as well as the journal *Indian Opinion* going. Although, almost as a godsend, an unsolicited cheque from Tata and other gifts from well-wishers in India arrived in the nick of time and helped to tide over the immediate crisis, there was no knowing how long the struggle might have to be carried on. Since Gandhi had now to devote almost all his time and energy to public service, he had little time —and less inclination—for professional legal work which had hitherto brought him enough income to sustain his public activity. It was a critical situation and something had to be done.

In this predicament Gandhi had recourse to what was at once the main principle of his ethico-political thought and its basic strategy, namely, self-help. The core of his organization must be made self-sustaining. His German friend and admirer Kallenbach, an architect by profession and an ardent Tolstoyan by conviction, came to his aid in this venture. He had purchased a farm of 1,100 acres, about 22 miles from Johannesburg, which he now offered to place at Gandhi's service for housing and maintaining the families of civil resisters arrested for defying the Black Act and the immigration ban. They named it Tolstoy Farm, with the permission and blessing of the Russian sage, and ran it on principles and in a manner which would have delighted his heart, had he been there to see it.

Gandhi had now two community settlements, or ashrams as they would be called in India, one at Phoenix near Durban where *Indian Opinion* was printed and where his wife and children lived, and the other the Tolstoy Farm outside Johannesburg where Gandhi and Kallenbach themselves lived and worked with the families of jailed satyagrahis. The life in both the places was of Spartan simplicity and so was the discipline.

Here Gandhi was at his best and happiest. He found comfort in hardship, and what is commonly known as self-denial was for him self-fulfilment. He worked with his hands, digging the soil, sawing wood, plastering walls, as a peasant and as a worker—to his heart's delight. He ran a school and made his first educational experiment, outside his home, of teaching through the heart and not through the head, by means of manual work and not by means of letters. He lived in the midst of snakes and had the satisfaction of not killing any. It was a monastic discipline, but the spirit was of joy.

There were troubles, no doubt; for some of the children were unruly and were not always amenable to the influence of love. Once Gandhi—who even when he had become the Mahatma was human enough to lose his temper occasionally—was so exasperated with an unruly boy that he actually struck him with a ruler. This solitary indulgence in violence remained a scar on his memory.

Nor was it always easy to maintain or enforce monastic celibacy in a co-educational experiment. Sexual adventures—to him most sinful aberrations—were bound to occur, and when one occurred at the Phoenix Settlement he hurried there and went on a week's fast, later followed by a longer ordeal for a fortnight. That was the first of the famous eighteen fasts of his life.

It was Gandhi's lifelong practice to find fault with himself before looking for it in others. Now, as later, he blamed himself for the lapse of his wards. 'So I imposed upon myself a fast for seven days and a vow to have only one meal a day for a period of four months and a half. . . My penance pained everybody, but it cleared the atmosphere. Everyone came to realize what a terrible thing it was to be sinful, and the bond that bound me to the boys and girls became stronger and truer.'

The naïve assumption that the effect of his penance on others was a genuine change of heart remained with him to the end. In political and business negotiations he was generally a shrewd lawyer not easily taken in by professed intentions, but in matters which touched his moral conscience he was willing to believe what others professed.

A Lull and the Storm

ALL THIS while the civil resistance was continuing, and batches of satyagrahis crossing into the Transvaal were being jailed or flogged or deported. The news of these brutalities perpetrated under the 'benign' auspices of the Imperial Government caused increasing indignation in India, thanks to Gokhale's warm espousal of the cause. The coronation of George V was at hand and the British authorities were anxious to assuage the Indian feelings. In deference to this overriding Imperial consideration the South African Government announced in early 1911 that the Indians would not be discriminated against on racial grounds as Asiatics. The entry into the Transvaal would depend on an education test. The four-year-old satyagraha was accordingly suspended and the prisoners were released. But it was no more than a lull in the storm, as the later events were to show.

In 1912 Gokhale paid a visit to South Africa and was treated with all the honour due to a state guest. Gokhale was Gandhi's political idol—though the votary proved greater than the idol—and had taken great personal interest in the Indian cause in South Africa. Gandhi was overjoyed at Gokhale's visit and accompanied him throughout the tour, acting as his secretary, nurse and valet, all in one. Gokhale suffered from diabetes and his diet had to be strictly regulated. Gandhi personally saw to its preparation, assisted by Mrs Polak who was both touched and amused. 'Mr Gokhale was very fastidious, too,' she reminisced later, 'about the neatness and correct folding of the Mahratta scarf that he wore across his shoulders, and Mr Gandhi would carefully iron and crease it with his own hands.'

Gokhale was taken in by the cordial reception accorded him by the South African Government, and by the assurances of goodwill made to him by Generals Botha and Smuts. After a long conference with the ministers he told Gandhi: 'You must return to India in a year. Everything has been settled. The Black Act will be repealed. The racial bar will be removed from the immigration law. The £3 tax will be abolished.' But Gandhi had his doubts. In political matters he could be shrewder than many professional politicians.

What Gokhale saw at first hand of Gandhi's work in South Africa and of the morale of his followers had greatly impressed him, and he said in a public speech in Bombay on his return: 'Only those who have come in personal contact with Mr Gandhi as he is now, can realize the wonderful personality of the man. He is without doubt made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. Nay, more, he has in him the marvellous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs.'

Gokhale's optimism about the assurances made to him by the South African leaders was short-lived. It was not long before Smuts announced the Government's inability to abolish the £ 3 tax on the ex-indentured labourers and their families. This was followed by a judgement of the Supreme Court in the Bai Mariam case invalidating for the purpose of immigration all Indian marriages not performed in accordance with Christian rites and not duly registered. This outrageous affront to the sanctity of Indian married life, Hindu, Muslim or Parsi, caused widespread indignation and induced women to take the field, side by side with their men, in defence of their honour. Gandhi had now a vast reserve of potential civil resisters, both among indentured labourers and among women of all sections.

Thus began in September 1913 the final phase of the struggle which Gandhi has described in detail in his *Satyagraha in South Africa*. He began cautiously, as always. A batch of no more than 16 volunteers from Phoenix, which included his wife, crossed into the Transvaal, defying the ban which forbade the entry of Indians without permit. They were arrested and sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour. Then a batch of women volunteers from the Tolstoy Farm crossed in the reverse direction, from the Transvaal into Natal, and reaching New Castle incited the Indian miners to strike. The women were gaoled; the strike spread. The authorities brutally retaliated by turning out the miners and their families from their tenements.

Gandhi found himself suddenly faced with the responsibility of having to look after, feed and keep in order several thousand labourers, homeless, workless and foodless. He hit upon a brilliant strategy. He turned the hungry, distracted rabble into an army of marchers into the Transvaal, there to court arrest. Let the authorities feed and house them! So the march began of an endless procession of men and women, many of them with babies in their arms.

Hardship and suffering, unavoidable and accidental, were cheerfully borne. One of the babies slipped from the mother's arms into a stream which was being crossed and was drowned. But the brave mother kept with the march saying, 'We must not pine for the dead who will not come back to us for all our pining. It is the living for whom we must work.'

Gandhi who led the march was ably assisted by his loyal European colleagues, Kallenbach, Polak and Miss Schlesin, his efficient and devoted secretary. Arrested thrice in four days, he was finally tried and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. His arrest was followed by that of Kallenbach and Polak. If the authorities hoped to demoralize the marchers by removing from their midst the chief inspirer and guide, their hope was belied.

Failing to demoralize them, they resorted to brutal and almost inhuman methods. As part of the jail sentences the miners were forced, under lash, to go down the very mines where they had struck work. When they refused, they were mercilessly flogged. Reports of these brutalities were received with widespread horror in India and even the British Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, was outspoken in his public condemnation of 'measures which should not for one moment be tolerated by any country that calls itself civilized'.

The Imperial Government, already suffering from a bad conscience, put pressure on General Smuts who in Gandhi's words, 'was in the same predicament as a snake which has made a mouthful of a rat but can neither gulp it down nor cast it out.' He had recourse to the usual face-saving device of appointing a Commission to inquire into the grievances of Indians, and Gandhi was released, along with his colleagues, Kallenbach and Polak. Meanwhile, Gokhale had sent from India two high-souled Englishmen, Charles Freer Andrews and W. W. Pearson whose presence as intermediaries proved helpful. Themselves true Christians in the best sense of the word, they were at once reminded of St Francis of Assissi when they first met Gandhi.

Gandhi was not satisfied with the composition of the all-white Commission which he feared was biased, and threatened to resume civil resistance. Before he could do so, Smuts was faced with a much bigger crisis. The workers of the South African railways—all white—went on strike. The situation was serious enough for martial law to be declared. Gandhi rose to the occasion. He called off his civil resistance march, declining to take advantage of his adversary's difficulty. This unexpected gesture touched the hearts of his stiff-necked adversaries and changed the atmosphere of hostility into one of conciliation. Smuts agreed to negotiate and sent for Gandhi.

Reviewing Gandhi's 'unique' manner of fighting, Professor Gilbert Murray commented: 'No wonder that he won the day. No genuinely human enemy could hold out against that method of fighting.'

On the other hand, it has been suggested that Gandhi functioned in South Africa as a parochial Indian patriot and his revolutionary role was limited to defending the interests of his countrymen. He did not espouse the more legitimate rights of the African natives who were treated far worse in their own land than were the Indian immigrants who were after all drawn or enticed there by economic lure. He has also been charged with letting down the white working class by siding with the ruling class at a time of national crisis.

To judge Gandhi by this orthodox revolutionary ideology is to misread completely his mind and the sources from which he drew his inspiration and strength. Gandhi was not, and did not wish to be, a Lenin or Mao, and it is as absurd to judge him by their values as it would be to judge them by his.

However, in January 1914 a provisional agreement was reached between Smuts and Gandhi and in June a bill was passed in the Union legislature, abolishing the £3 tax, legalizing all marriages deemed valid by Indian law or custom and allowing certain other concessions. It was not a victory for either side, in the ordinary sense of the word where victory of one side means defeat and humiliation for the other. In Gandhi's unique battles the victory was shared by both the sides. That was the beauty claimed by Gandhi for satyagraha, that it won, not by defeating but by winning over. Very different from the war by violence where the cost of victory is always greater than the gain, as the Emperor Asoka realized after the carnage of Kalinga and as more than two thousand years later the Duke of Wellington understood when he said after having routed the forces of the seemingly invincible Napoleon: 'Nothing except a battle lost can be half as melancholy as a battle won.'

Farewell to Africa

EVER AN optimist, Gandhi in his 'Farewell Letter' to his countrymen and Europeans he was leaving behind in South Africa described the settlement with Smuts, which was essentially a compromise, as 'the Magna Charta of our liberty in this land'. He was still under the spell of his faith in the innate decency of English character, the glorious tradition, as he was never tired of repeating, of the British Constitution and the basically humane mission of the British Empire.

'I give it the historic name,' he explained, 'not because it gives us rights which we have never enjoyed and which are in themselves new or striking, but because it has come to us after eight years' strenuous suffering, that has involved the loss of material possessions and of precious lives. I call it our Magna Charta because it marks a change in the policy of the Government towards us and establishes our right not only to be consulted in matters affecting us, but to have our reasonable wishes respected. It moreover confirms the theory of the British Constitution that there should be no legal racial inequality between different subjects of the Crown, no matter how much practice may vary according to local circumstance. Above all, the settlement may well be called our Magna Charta, because it has vindicated passive resistance as a lawful, clean weapon, and has given in passive resistance a new strength to the community; and I consider it an infinitely superior force to that of the vote, which history shows has often been turned against the voters themselves.'

In a farewell public speech at Cape Town he said to the mixed audience: 'Rightly or wrongly, for good or for evil, Englishmen and Indians have been knit together, and it behoves both races so to mould themselves as to leave a splendid legacy to the generations yet to be born, and to show that though Empires have gone and fallen, this Empire perhaps may be an exception and that this is an Empire not founded on material but on spiritual foundations.'

That in the next five years the British Government at home and in India should have completely destroyed this exuberant faith of so sincere a friend is the great irony of Imperial destiny. The blindness of the votary is sooner or later dispelled; that of the Imperial gods grows.

'That Gandhi could carry on the South African campaign for more than twenty years,' commented Romain Rolland, 'without awakening any special comment in Europe is a proof of the incredible shortsightedness of our political leaders, historians, thinkers and believers, for Gandhi's efforts constituted a soul's epopee, unequalled in our times, not only because of the intensity and the constancy of the sacrifice required, but because of the final triumph.'

On 18 July 1914 Gandhi, accompanied by Kasturbai and Kallenbach, had his last look of the benighted continent where he had found his light. Whatever his countrymen may think or say of South Africa today, this man of God who never ceased to be the universal man, however much he loved his own people, carried no bitterness in his heart. In fact he said in his farewell testament: 'This sub-continent has become to me a sacred and dear land, next only to my motherland. I leave the shores of South Africa with a heavy heart, and the distance that will now separate me from South Africa will but draw me closer to it, and its welfare will always be a matter of great concern, and the love bestowed upon me by my countrymen and the generous forbearance and kindness extended to me by the Europeans will ever remain a most cherished treasure in my memory.'

Much as Gandhi yearned to get back to his own country, he had to sail for England where Gokhale had summoned him. The last three years had been very strenuous and he had recently undergone a fortnight's fast as a penance for another's lapse. He was far from strong, but he insisted on travelling third class. Fortunately, the steamer authorities made special arrangements for him and his party on the deck, and adequate provision for supply of fruitarian diet. The company of Kallenbach was congenial, and they could discuss at leisure their future plans.

An incident of the voyage recalled by Gandhi shows how the privilege of close association with him was not without its price. Kallenbach had more than one pair of binoculars and his companion-monitor watched with disapproval his attachment to them. How could possession of binoculars be consistent with the ideal of non-possession which Kallenbach claimed to share with him? So, rather than allow them to be a bone of contention, why not throw them into the sea and be done with them? suggested Gandhi. Kallenbach was equal to the occasion. 'Certainly, throw the wretched things away,' he answered readily. 'And forthwith I flung them into the sea,' recalled Gandhi, not without a certain pride of satisfaction.

As the ship entered the English channel the news of the outbreak of the Great War burst upon the passengers. It took two days to cross the channel as the ship had to be carefully towed through the mines. On reaching London Gandhi learned that Gokhale who had been to visit Paris was stranded there.

Duty to the Empire

With Britain at war, what was Gandhi's duty? Inaction or sitting back and doing nothing, or sitting on the fence, as the picturesque American phrase goes, was alien to his nature. He recalled what he had done at the time of the Boer War and the Zulu 'rebellion'. Should he not offer his services again to the Empire in this crisis?

He consulted his Indian friends in England. Many of them argued that England's need was India's opportunity to make good her claim to freedom. It was not the slave's duty, they said, to help the master defend a system which had made the slavery possible.

But this line of argument did not appeal to Gandhi. In the first place, he did not at that time look upon Britain as the enemy of India's freedom. In the second place, even if Britain were to be regarded as an enemy, it was not brave nor righteous to take advantage of an enemy in distress. He therefore wrote to the British authorities offering to raise an Indian Ambulance Corps and invited his countrymen in England and Ireland to enlist.

Henry Polak cabled from South Africa questioning the consistency of this action with his profession of *ahimsa* or non-violence. But Gandhi was never a conformist—neither now nor later—in this or any other respect. He conformed neither to the conventional creed of pacifism nor to a rigid interpretation of his professed creed of non-violence. His own concept was evolving and subject to experiment. He made no distinction between combatants and non-combatants. If the cause was wicked one should have nothing to do with it in any capacity. If, on the other hand, one was not in a position to judge, one must do what one can to help.

In a letter to his nephew and close comrade Maganlal, he explained the working of his mind: 'One who would not help a slaughter-house should not help in cleaning the butcher's house either. But I found that, living in England, I was in a way participating in the War. London owes the food it gets in war-time to the protection of the Navy. Thus to take this food was also a wrong thing. . .It seemed to me a base thing, therefore, to accept food tainted by war without working for it. When thousands have come forward to lay down their lives only because they thought it their duty to do so, how could I sit still? A rifle this hand will never fire. And so there only remained nursing the wounded and I took it up.'

Gandhi's offer having been accepted by the British Government, he and those who had volunteered with him were put under training. But before the training could be completed and the Corps sent to the front, Gandhi contracted pleurisy and had to withdraw from the Corps. He was persuaded by friends, doctors and the authorities to proceed to India and avoid the approaching English winter which would not be conducive to his recovery. He yielded to the advice and sailed for home in December, accompanied by his wife.

Kallenbach, born a German, was not allowed to accompany them to India, despite Gandhi's best efforts to get him a British passport. 'It was a great wrench for me to part from Mr Kallenbach,' wrote Gandhi, 'but I could see that his pang was greater.'

The homeward voyage was uneventful, except that Gandhi noted that the 'distance' between the English and Indian passengers was greater than on his voyage from South Africa. He sensed the atmosphere as ominous and was eager to get back to his country where Gokhale who had preceded him was waiting to welcome him. He was returning home 'after an exile of ten years', though its total duration was twice as long.

Homecoming

In April 1893 a young, bewildered barrister, raw and inexperienced, had sailed for South Africa in search of fortune. In January 1915 Gandhi returned home for good, after more than two decades of a unique 'fortune hunting' in the course of which he had dispossessed himself of what little he had taken when he originally set out on his quest. A fortune, invisible and imperishable, he did bring, but it was the wealth of 'the Great Soul in beggar's garb', as the poet Tagore put it. In the fabulous land of gold-mining, he had mined and amassed a different kind of gold, which no thief can steal nor fire melt.

But at that time few in India had a true measure of him, although, thanks to Gokhale's interest in him, he received a warm welcome in Bombay. Nor did he know his India well. He therefore readily promised Gokhale, his 'political guru', that he would spend the first year in India studying the conditions, 'his ears open but his mouth shut'.

After a brief visit to his people in Rajkot and Porbandar, Gandhi hastened to Santiniketan where some of the pupils and associates from Phoenix, who had reached India earlier, had been provided a temporary home in Rabindranath Tagore's school-ashram in Bengal.

Strangely enough, it was an Englishman, Charles Freer Andrews, who was the link between these two great representatives of modern India, the ascetic and the bard, as unlike each other in externals as they were akin in spirit. For Tagore, Beauty was an aspect of Truth; Gandhi needed no other Beauty but Truth. Each understood the other; the difference was in the emphasis and not basic. Tagore was the first notable contemporary to refer to Gandhi as Mahatma, which appellation stuck to him since.

Gandhi found the reception arranged for him in Santiniketan 'a beautiful combination of simplicity, art and love'. He stayed for a week only, but the unfading fragrance of this visit survives to this day. In no time he won over the hearts of the teachers and pupils and made them amenable to his way of thinking, namely, that all work must be done with one's own hands. So the paid cooks were dispensed with, and the teachers and pupils did all the cooking and cleaning themselves, Tagore's other English friend, Pearson, the most zealous of them all. Overnight, Santiniketan was turned into Phoenix. Not altogether like Phoenix, though. For, while one batch cleaned the utensils, another played *sitar* for them, to help 'beguile the tedium of the operation'.

When this 'revolution' was reported to the Poet, he smiled and said, 'The experiment contains the key to Swaraj.' But his smile was amused and sceptical. Would the enthusiasm last, once the wizard who inspired it was removed from their midst? It did not, and the cooks returned to their posts. But to this day a symbol has survived. Every year in March the inmates of Santiniketan observe the Gandhi Day, when the cooks and other menial staff are given a holiday and all the work is done by the pupils and teachers.

Gandhi's stay at Santiniketan was interrupted by the sudden news of Gokhale's death. He hurried to Poona where he offered to join the Servants of India Society which had been founded by Gokhale. But sensing that many members mistrusted his radical views as well as his method of political agitation, he withdrew his application for membership so as to spare any embarrassment to the Society, saying to himself in his characteristic way, 'The withdrawal of my application made me truly a member of the Society.'

In keeping with his earlier promise to Gokhale, Gandhi spent the year travelling to different places, seeing things for himself, keeping his eyes and ears open. Visiting the sacred Kumbha Fair at Hardwar, he was more aware 'of the pilgrims' absent-mindedness, hypocrisy and slovenliness than of their piety'. Seeing the iniquity and fraud practised in the name of religion he was sick at heart and sat up a whole night thinking what he should do, what self-denial he might impose on himself to atone for this sin of others. Thus he came to pledge himself not to take more than five articles of diet a day (inclusive of any medicine that may have to be taken) and never to eat after dark.

The pledge had the additional merit, from his point of view, of sparing his future hosts the need of indulging in extravagant hospitality on his account. He had not forgotten his embarrassment when he discovered during his recent visit to Calcutta that the ladies of the house where he stayed had sat up the whole night skinning nuts and dressing fresh fruit for him.

At the end of his year's wanderings, Gandhi, anxious to set up a permanent home for his Phoenix party, settled down on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, first in Kochrab and then on the bank of the river Sabarmati where he founded an ashram which he called Satyagraha Ashram. The inmates, about twenty-five of both sexes and varying age, took the vows of truth, celibacy, non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession, control of the palate and total dedication to the service of the people. A patriotic monastery, if ever there was one.

Ahmedabad is an important centre of textile industry and many of its wealthy citizens had persuaded Gandhi to set up his ashram there, promising donations for its upkeep. An additional attraction was the challenge involved in planting the banner of hand-spinning in the very heart of this citadel of mechanized industry. But there was no smooth sailing for a vessel at whose helm was Gandhi. As soon as he had admitted an 'untouchable' family as inmates of the ashram, there was a revolt. The donations stopped.

More painful was the attitude of some of his closest associates in the ashram who refused to suffer the 'untouchables' in their midst. Even Kasturba who had survived many a 'contamination' in South Africa would have nothing to do with the new inmates.

But Gandhi was firm. He invited all objectors to leave him and offered to go and live among the 'untouchables' in their slums and to earn his bread with them. The storm blew over.

Gandhi's first public address in India was on the occasion of the inaugural ceremony of the Banaras Hindu University in February 1916, a function marked by great splendour and distinguished by the presence of the Viceroy, many princes and magnates. Speaking in English he expressed his 'deep humiliation and shame' at being obliged 'to address my countrymen in a language that is foreign to me'. The embarrassment of the august assembly flared into indignation when turning to the bejewelled princes he went on to say: 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India.' Many princes walked out in anger.

After a self-imposed ban for a year, he could now afford to explode. He did.

Rehearsal in India

GANDHI WAS not itching for a fight or manoeuvring for leadership. He never sought either, before, now or later. But he somehow found battle and leadership both ready at hand, in South Africa more than two decades earlier and now in India. Destiny had marked him out for both, and he was not to be spared.

He was still watching the scene, taking stock of the political situation in the country and looking after his Ashram, when he found himself involved in his first venture or rehearsal in civil resistance (or, as he preferred to call it, satyagraha) in India.

It happened in Champaran, a district in Bihar, where he went in 1917 at the persistent request of a poor peasant who had begged him to visit the area and see for himself the desperate condition of the peasants who were obliged by European planters to grow indigo on a certain percentage of their land and to part with the crop at a fixed price, inevitably to the peasant's detriment. The arrangement, bolstered by law and enforced with baton, was iniquitous and arbitrary, and the peasants groaned under its load.

Gandhi had never heard of Champaran before and had hardly any notion of what indigo plantations were like. But when he saw the peasants and listened to their tales he knew that his immediate mission lay with them.

The news that a Mahatma had arrived on the scene to inquire into this iniquity spread like wild fire, and thousands of peasants left their villages and flocked to where Gandhi was staying, to have his *darshan* and to tell him of their woes. The vested interests were immediately up in arms and the Police Superintendent ordered Gandhi to leave the district. On Gandhi's refusal to oblige him, he was summoned to appear in court the following day. Thousands of peasants followed Gandhi to the court. The embarrassed magistrate postponed the trial and released the accused without bail, for Gandhi refused to furnish any.

The case was later withdrawn. Gandhi proceeded with his inquiry. Side by side, as he conducted the inquiry, he educated the peasants in the principles of satyagraha. The plinth on which alone could freedom be raised, he explained to them, was freedom from fear. He organized volunteers to instruct the illiterate peasants in elementary hygiene and to run schools for their children. This was typical of Gandhian strategy—to maintain simultaneously two fronts, a front against injustice from without, and a front against ignorance and helplessness within. A people to be free must learn to stand on their legs. Even as he emboldened them to fight for their rights, he taught them to fulfil their obligations.

But the more he worked among the people the more embarrassed and unnerved became the authorities who were at last obliged to appoint a commission of inquiry, with Gandhi as one of the members. The report of the commission which was unanimous went in favour of the tenant-farmers, although Gandhi, always ready to meet his opponent part of the way, agreed to a minor concession in favour of the planters. Sir George Rainy, a member of the commission, was so impressed with Gandhi's double-edged ability to argue his own case convincingly and to see without bias his opponent's point of view that he remarked, 'Mr Gandhi reminds me of the Apostle Paul.'

Hardly was the work in Champaran done when Gandhi had to hurry back to his Sabarmati Ashram on receipt of an urgent appeal from the textile workers of Ahmedabad whose dispute with the mill-owners had taken a serious turn. Having satisfied himself that the workers' demands were legitimate and the mill-owners' refusal to submit the dispute to arbitration unreasonable, Gandhi advised the workers to strike—but not before they had pledged to carry on the struggle non-violently. They readily agreed.

But after about two weeks their zeal began to flag and their morale weaken. Gandhi feared that some of them might break the pledge and resort to violence. Since it was the fear of starvation that was driving the workers to desperation, Gandhi decided to starve himself. He announced that he would not touch food until a settlement had been reached.

The labourers were stunned. 'Not you but we shall fast,' they pleaded. But Gandhi would not let them fast and said that he would be satisfied if they remained true to their pledge of non-violence. The mill-owners were even more flabbergasted. Caught between two fires, they were in a moral panic. At the end of three days both parties agreed to an arbitration, amid general rejoicing.

A fast invariably helped to extricate Gandhi from a moral dilemma. It rescued him from a sense of helplessness which he always found intolerable. The self-imposed suffering brought him a feeling of spiritual exaltation. But it also placed the other party in a moral dilemma of their own. The fast, no doubt, touched and sometimes melted the heart, as the spectacle of suffering cheerfully borne for others' sake must do, but its effect was also partly coercive. Coercion does not cease to be coercion if it is applied with love and not enforced by brute force.

Almost immediately after this ordeal came the news of the agrarian trouble in the Kheda district of Gujarat. 'No breathing time,' commented Gandhi later, 'was in store for me.' The peasantry were on the verge of starvation owing to a widespread failure of crops, but the authorities were insistent on their pound of flesh. Gandhi advised civil resistance and persuaded all the peasants, the better-off as well as the poor, to take a pledge not to pay the tax unless those who could not pay were granted remission.

The no-tax campaign lasted for about four months at the end of which the Government had the good sense to suspend the assessment for the poor peasants. The end was, as usual, a compromise; but what heartened Gandhi was the fact that the peasantry had seen for themselves 'that the salvation of the people depends upon themselves, upon their capacity for suffering and sacrifice'.

Meanwhile, the Great War was raging in Europe and a crisis seemed imminent. This led to a development which still baffles the pacifists of the West. Early in 1918 when a German offensive was feared, the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford convened a War Conference in Delhi to enlist the support of Indian leaders for an intensified recruitment of soldiers. Gandhi was invited. Since he still believed, despite Champaran and Kheda, that the British Empire was by and large a power for good, and India was on the whole the better for the British connection, he accepted the invitation and supported the resolution that it was the duty of every Indian to help the Empire in the hour of its need. He did more. He actually campaigned as 'a recruiting sergeant' for the Imperial army.

Unlike the previous occasions when he had volunteered to aid the Empire in distress by raising an Ambulance Corps, this time he called upon people to enlist to kill and be killed. He knew that his campaigning roused little popular enthusiasm, and in fact in the very district of Kheda where he had recently led a no-tax campaign and was a popular hero, hardly anyone came to receive him or to listen to him when he revisited it as 'a recruiting sergeant'. But lack of popular approval never deterred Gandhi from action which he believed to be justified on its merit.

The merit in this case lay in his belief that the seeming peacefulness of his people was not on account of their courageous faith in non-violence but their cowardly fear of fighting. As he wrote to his old friend Polak: 'What do you say to my recruiting campaign? It is for me a religious activity undertaken for the sacred doctrine of *ahimsa* (non-violence). I have made the discovery that India has lost the power to fight—not the inclination. She must regain the power and then, if she will, deliver to a groaning world the doctrine of *ahimsa*. She must give abundantly out of her strength, not out of her weakness. She may never do it. That to me would mean her effacement. She would lose her individuality and would be like the other nations—a worshipper of brute-force. This recruiting work is perhaps the hardest task yet undertaken by me.'

It certainly turned out to be the hardest on his health, which broke down almost completely and brought him near death's door. At one time he believed he would not survive, and said to those around, despondently, that 'his whole life had been one in which he had taken up things, left them half done, and now he was to pass away; but if that was the will of God, there was no help'.

It was during this prolonged breakdown that he was persuaded by Kasturba to take goat's milk. He had earlier forsworn milk altogether, partly because he believed that no animal product could be a natural food for man, but mainly because he had been told of the cruel practices employed by some milkmen in India to extract the last ounce of yield from the helpless cows and buffaloes. When therefore the doctors insisted on his taking milk and he pleaded his inability on account of his earlier vow, Kasturba who was listening pointed out that his vow had related to milk of the cow and the buffalo only. Gandhi, though very weak in body, was too alert of mind not to know that the distinction, however formally valid, was little better than quibbling. 'Yet knowing all this I agreed to take goat's milk,' he recorded later. 'The will to live proved stronger than the devotion to truth, and for once the votary of truth compromised his sacred ideal by his eagerness to take up the satyagraha fight.'

Riding the Storm

A FIGHT was indeed not far off. The rumble of an approaching storm was audible. Britain's victory in the War had roused hopes that the regime in India would be liberalized. It was in that hope that Gandhi had called upon the people to help the War effort. 'Ours is a consecration based on the hope of a better future,' he had written to the Viceroy in 1918. Instead, the people received from the Government the gift of Rowlatt Bill, curtailing severely their civil liberties and vesting an irresponsible executive with arbitrary powers of arrest and imprisonment without proper trial.

As always, the challenge proved to be the best of tonics. It dispelled Gandhi's temporary despondency, roused his will to live and brought him into the thick of the battle, even while he was still convalescing.

He came to Delhi and listened to the debate on the Bill in the Legislative Council, the only time he ever attended a legislative sitting. He listened to the passionate speeches of Indian leaders pleading with the Government to withdraw the vicious, draconian measure and warning the Viceroy, who was present and listening, of the grave consequences if the arbitrary legislation was rushed through in the teeth of the united opposition of the people's representatives. Seeing that the Viceroy was 'listening spell-bound', Gandhi for a moment thought that he could not but be moved by what was said, so true and convincing it was. 'But,' as he realized later, 'you can wake a man only if he is really asleep; no effort that you may make will produce any effect upon him if he is merely pretending sleep.'

It was the Rowlatt Bill which hustled Gandhi into riding the storm of active Indian politics. From 1919 to his death in 1948, he occupied the centre of the Indian stage and was the chief hero of the great historical drama which culminated in the independence of his country. He changed the entire character of the political scene in India. He himself did not change. He only grew in stature and dimension. In the smoke and din of the battle he remained essentially what he was—a man of God.

Since the Rowlatt Bill was not a local issue and the struggle had to be launched on a national scale, Gandhi pondered deeply what shape it should take. He had earlier founded a Satyagraha Sabha and drafted a pledge of non-violence which all members had to sign. But that was not enough. He had to rouse the people's will to defiance and yet keep their passion from breaking into violence—all over the country, and not merely in Bombay or Delhi. Since his return from abroad he had travelled widely over north India. He had yet to make the south his own. So now he left on a tour of southern India.

It was during this tour that he came to know Rajagopalachari who was to become one of his most devoted and trusted colleagues in the national struggle. It was while he was staying with Rajaji (as Rajagopalachari came to be popularly known) when one night as Gandhi fell asleep, still wondering what shape the satyagraha movement should take, that the idea came to him 'as if in a dream' that his first step should be to call upon the country to observe a general *hartal* or suspension of all normal business 'and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer'.

Accordingly, 30 March 1919 was announced as the day of *hartal*. The date was later changed to 6 April. The change was responsible for a little confusion, for while Delhi observed the *hartal* on 30 March, the rest of India did so on 6 April. But both in Delhi and elsewhere the day was observed with an unprecedented mass enthusiasm which took even Gandhi by surprise. He had not realized how dramatic was the appeal of his personality on the Indian masses. The Government's complacency received a rude shock to see the erstwhile 'recruiting sergeant' of the Empire turn a rebel.

Gandhi was in Bombay when the day was observed and he personally directed the programme which included the open sale, in defiance of the ban, of two of his Gujarati books previously proscribed, *Hind Swaraj* and the Gujarati adaptation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The Government wisely refrained from interfering with the sale, on the convenient ground that the ban had applied to the original edition and not to its reprint.

On the following day Gandhi left for Delhi where the earlier demonstration of 30 March had been put down by the Government with a heavy hand, with indiscriminate shooting of the innocent processionists. Before Gandhi could reach Delhi he was intercepted at a wayside station and served with a notice not to proceed further. On his refusal to obey the order he was arrested and brought back to Bombay where he was set free. Meanwhile the news of his arrest had spread like wild fire and caused great excitement among the people in many cities, resulting in sporadic violence.

When Gandhi learnt of this violence he was horrified and felt that 'a rapier run through my body could hardly have pained me more'. Publicly accusing himself of 'a Himalayan miscalculation' in assuming that people were ready for satyagraha when they were not adequately trained for it, he imposed on himself the penance of a three-day fast and suspended the satyagraha movement.

On the very day, 13 April 1919, when Gandhi announced his penance in expiation of the sporadic aberrations of an excited mob, General Dyer commanding the British troops in Amritsar ordered the massacre of an unarmed holiday crowd of men, women and children who had gathered in Jallianwala Bag on the Hindu New Year day. The garden had only one gate where the General had stationed his troops and guns. The walls were too high for the people to climb over. It was like shooting rats caught in a trap. The casualties admitted by the official Government report were 400 killed and between 1,000 and

2,000 wounded, though the public inquiry conducted by Gandhi himself estimated 1,200 killed and 3,600 wounded.

This cowardly massacre of the innocent was followed by declaration of martial law in the Punjab, with its ghastly trail of indiscriminate arrests, public floggings and the inhuman order by which all Indians passing a certain street were made to crawl on their bellies like worms. The events of that day which has been called by Sir Valentine Chirol as 'that black day in the annals of British India' mark a turning point in the history of Indo-British relationship. It made the first fatal crack in the edifice of the British Raj. The seemingly rock-like Empire was never the same again. The moral prestige of Britain received a blow from which it never recovered till the Empire relinquished its hold over India 28 years later.

It was characteristic of Gandhi that great as was his agony over the tragic happenings in the Punjab, he shared with equal concern the Indian Muslims' dismay at the fate of the defeated Turkish Sultan who was also the Caliph or religious head of Islam. In fact, it was on this issue that he first called upon his countrymen, Hindus and Muslims both, to non-co-operate with the British Government.

The Rowlatt Act and the Punjab atrocities being an altogether different issue from the dismemberment of the defeated Turkish empire, the moral validity of Gandhi's combining the two issues in one national crusade was questioned by many of his admirers even then. Some even felt that the Turkish Sultan, though in theory a spiritual head, was in fact the reactionary symbol of a decadent and tyrannical empire, and the Arab peoples were well rid of its rule. But Gandhi looked at the problem differently. For him it was a question of Hindus standing by their Muslim brethren in their hour of need. 'Their sorrows are our sorrows,' he emphasized.

A Great Upsurge

Despite the grave provocations, Gandhi had not yet wholly lost his faith in the British intentions. As late as the end of the year 1919 he advised the Indian National Congress to welcome the King's proclamation announcing the Crown's assent to the Reforms Act and to give a fair trial to the new constitutional experiment in a spirit of genuine co-operation. To the excited delegates who had met in Amritsar where the air reeked with the erstwhile British horrors, he admonished, 'I say, do not return madness with madness, but return madness with sanity and the whole situation will be yours.'

But his faith was being steadily undermined. When he found that the British Government instead of making amends for the Punjab wrongs was bent upon whitewashing the criminal acts of its responsible officers and that the British public, in whose instinct for fair play and revulsion against cruelty Gandhi had even a greater faith, had, unmindful of Burke's warning that great empires and little minds go ill together, raised a handsome public purse for General Dyer, his faith received a shattering blow. What had hitherto seemed to him as by and large a beneficent regime now revealed a visage sinister and sardonic. With such a 'satanic' rule it was the duty of every Indian to non-co-operate.

He had always believed that nations, like men, lose their freedom through their own weakness, and had written as early as 1909 in his *Hind Swaraj:* 'The English have not taken India, we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength but because we keep them.' It therefore followed that if the Indians withdrew the co-operation they had voluntarily and tacitly given all these years, the regime must necessarily collapse.

He persuaded both the Khilafat Committee and the National Congress to accept his programme of non-violent non-co-operation with the British Government in India. Since the foreign government was wholly evil, all institutions that had developed under its aegis were likewise tainted. They must all be boycotted. Government servants should resign their posts, lawyers should shun law courts, students should leave schools and colleges, every one should give up the use of foreign goods, in particular cloth, and all should become dedicated servants of the people and voluntary non-violent soldiers of freedom.

The programme sounded too idealistic to be practicable and many sober and experienced politicians in the field were amused by it or frankly scoffed at it. But Gandhi's call worked like a magic wand and roused a storm of unprecedented enthusiasm among the people. It is interesting to recall that only four years earlier, when he had attended the Lucknow session of the Congress, he was more an observer than a participant and had seemed to Jawaharlal Nehru 'very distant and different and unpolitical'. Now he dominated the field and almost refashioned the National Congress, turning talking politicians into active soldiers, and anglicized leaders of society into servants of the people clad in white home-spun.

From now on Gandhi steadily bridged the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses and widened the concept of Swaraj to include almost every aspect of social and moral regeneration. It is no wonder that the story of his life is the story of how a people, seemingly dumb, inert and despairing, fought for and won freedom for their nation.

Significantly his own Autobiography ends with his emergence as the Mahatma and the undisputed leader of his people. His life was henceforth an open book, every gesture, every act of his was exposed to limelight, and he himself shared every thought of his with the public through the columns of the two weeklies he edited, *Young India* in English, and *Navajivan* in Gujarati.

He began the campaign, as he always did, by a notice in advance to the Government. Returning the medals and decorations he had received from the British Government for his humanitarian work in the service of the Empire, he wrote to the Viceroy: 'I can retain neither respect nor affection for a government which has been moving from wrong to wrong to defend its immorality.' Many Indians renounced their titles and honours, following his lead (Rabindranath Tagore had renounced his knighthood earlier, soon after the Jallianwala Bag massacre), lawyers gave up their practice, students left schools and colleges, and thousands of the city-bred trekked into the villages to spread the message of non-violent non-co-operation with the 'satanic' government.

The people, somnolent for centuries, woke up in the exultation of a new awareness of their human dignity, filled with courage and a spirit of sacrifice. Bonfires of foreign cloth lit up the streets and squares in cities, towns and villages, and the hum of the spinning wheel rose like a sacrificial chant in thousands of homes. Women, secluded for centuries in their self-contained domestic worlds, marched in the streets, shoulder to shoulder with men, and, incidentally, freed themselves from age-old shackles.

Many had ridiculed Gandhi's proud assurance that Swaraj could be won in one year, little realizing that for Gandhi freedom from fear was the very soul of Swaraj. And this indeed was won within the year. In speech after speech during his whirlwind tours, in article after article in his two weeklies, Gandhi poured forth his impassioned utterances, his chaste and spirited prose glowing with a fire that drew men and women from far and near as moths are drawn to a burning flame. Thousands were clapped in prison and many more thousands were preparing to court arrest which now seemed a mark of honour.

'I am a man of peace,' said Gandhi in his address to the Congress session in Ahmedabad, on 28 December 1921. 'I believe in peace. But I do not want peace at any price. I do not want the peace that you find in stone; I do not want the peace that you find in the grave...' So great was the enthusiasm and courage roused by the Mahatma's call to battle that W. W. Pearson who had recently returned to India wrote, 'Your work has borne its fruit, for India is already free.' Indeed, commented Gandhi, freedom is ours as soon as we are ready to pay the price for it.

This momentous period when Gandhi rode the high crest of revolutionary zeal—to him a holy crusade—also witnessed his major public debate with Tagore over the implications of his call for Non-co-operation, which has been discussed superbly and at length by Romain Rolland in his little biography of the Mahatma. The Poet had roused the poet in Gandhi whose impassioned reply remains a classic utterance of his faith at its sublimest. The controversy, if controversy it can be called, soared so high that it merely showed that these two great spirits of modern India were kindred at a level which was far above the heads and hearts of their admirers. As a matter of fact, Tagore in many a poem and drama had anticipated and hailed the advent of Gandhi long before the actual Gandhi arrived on the scene. On 12 April 1919, a day before the Jallianwala Bag massacre, he had addressed an open letter hailing him as 'Mahatmaji' and as 'a great leader of men' who had come to his people in a time of crisis. Discussing the Non-co-operation Movement with an American correspondent in the United States, Tagore had said: 'It is fortunate that this movement is headed by a man like Gandhi whose saintly life has made him adored all over India. As long as he is at the helm I am not afraid of the ship, or doubtful of its safe arrival at the port of destination.'

The Pendulum Swings

GANDHI WAS in high spirits. The magic of non-violence seemed to work the miracle he had hoped for and claimed for it. Suddenly the pendulum swung. In February 1922 there was an outbreak of mob violence at Chauri Chaura in what is now known as Uttar Pradesh in north India. A frenzied mob had set fire to a police post causing the death of several constables trapped therein. Gandhi was shocked beyond measure and, against the advice of almost all his colleagues, suspended the non-co-operation campaign. 'The drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise,' he admitted; 'but,' he went on to say, 'there is no doubt that it is religiously sound, and I venture to assure the doubters that the country will have gained by my humiliation and confession of error.'

Whether the country gained or not by this sudden reversal of the campaign in full swing, the British Government gained a tactical advantage. The anti-climax damped the spirit of the people and shook their faith in the political wisdom of their leader. But Gandhi was unmoved by such considerations. 'The only virtue I want to claim,' he declared, 'is Truth and Non-violence. I lay no claim to superhuman powers. I want none. I wear the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of my fellow beings wears and am therefore as liable to err as any.'

Romain Rolland's comment on this episode is characteristic of the French idealist: 'The history of humanity's spiritual progress can point to few pages as noble as these. The moral value of such an action is incomparable, but as a political move it was disconcerting.'

Disconcerting, indeed, it was. So at any rate it seemed at that time. The Government saw in the anti-climax a golden opportunity. Gandhi was arrested on 10 March 1922, late in the evening at 10 p.m. when the Ahmedabad public would presumably be in bed. His reaction was one of great relief and joy. 'Oh! the happy day,' he exclaimed, 'the best thing has happened; the best thing indeed has happened!'

At the trial Gandhi, as was his practice, pleaded guilty to the charge of sedition and made a statement in the court which has become a classic of its kind. Reviewing his past career and his transformation from a loyal believer in the British Empire to an unrepentant rebel, he told the British Judge, R. S. Broomfield:

'I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggressor...She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines...Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime which is perhaps unequalled in history.'

He gave credit to individual British administrators and their Indian colleagues for their honest faith that they were administrating one of the best systems of government. 'I have no personal ill will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King's person,' he assured the Judge; and went on to add: 'But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system... I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen.'

Sentencing him to six years' simple imprisonment, the Judge paid him a courteous and graceful personal compliment and expressed the hope that, 'if the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I.'

Prison was for Gandhi more a rest-cure and holiday than a punishment. 'At last I am having a quiet time,' he wrote to C. F. Andrews. 'Just now I am enjoying myself in my house of freedom,' he wrote to another correspondent. He could now devote more time to prayer, study and spinning. But he was not fated to 'enjoy perfect peace' for long.

In January 1924 he had to be removed to a hospital in Poona for an emergency operation for appendicitis which was performed by a British surgeon, Col. Maddock, in whom Gandhi expressed his full confidence in a written statement recorded in the presence of his much-respected countryman, Srinivasa Sastri, who had succeeded Gokhale as President of the Servants of India Society. 'While I have a deep quarrel with the Government,' he said to Sastri, 'I love the Englishmen and have many friends among them.'

Finding himself alone with the patient, while the operation theatre was being got ready, Sastri pressed him for a message to his people and the country. But Gandhi declined to give any, saying that 'he was a prisoner of Government and he must observe the prisoner's code of honour scrupulously.' Soon after, he was shifted to the operation room. 'I sat outside,' recalled Sastri, 'marvelling at the exhibition I had witnessed of high-mindedness, forgiveness, chivalry and love transcending ordinary human nature, and what a mercy it was that the non-co-operation movement should have had a leader of such serene vision and sensitiveness to honour.'

While Gandhi was still convalescing he was released by the Government. What he saw of his country as a free man pained him greatly. It was only two years since the country had been swept over by a wave of patriotic and idealistic upsurge which had united Hindus and Muslims as never before. Where was the wave and what had happened to the unity now? Instead there was confusion, despondency and cynicism everywhere. Hindus and Muslims had drifted apart. For in the meanwhile the Turks under Kemal Ataturk had themselves repudiated the Khilafat and knocked the bottom out of the Indian Muslims' passionate crusade for its preservation. The Muslims no longer needed Hindu support; the edge of their grudge against the British had worn off; egged on by the astute rulers, the two major communities had learnt to mistrust one another. Communal riots had broken out in many places.

Not knowing how to stem this tide of frustration, Gandhi undertook a fast of twentyone days, to atone once again for the sins of his people. 'It seems as if God has been dethroned,' he said, announcing the fast. 'Let us reinstate Him in our hearts.' He had earlier confessed after breaking one of his many fasts: 'I am too human not to be touched by the sorrows of others, and when I find no remedy for alleviating them, my human nature so agitates me that I pine to embrace death like a long-lost, dear friend.'

The fast had its impact, as usual. It led to considerable heart-searching and, long before it was over, pledges of amity poured in upon him from leaders of both communities. A Unity Conference was held in Delhi and a number of well-meaning resolutions were passed. But goodwill generated in an emotional upsurge has a way of dissolving soon. So it happened. It set Gandhi thinking.

Brick by Brick

HE HAD seen to his dismay how easily an untrained following could degenerate into a rabble. A non-violent army needed even more discipline and a greater training in initiative than an orthodox army equipped with weapons. So while the politicians argued, agitated and wrangled, he would concentrate on training a corps of soldiers whom he would teach to infiltrate into India's seven hundred thousand villages, there to build moral and economic barricades against all forms of tyranny or exploitation, foreign or native, political or economic. He would prepare the ground and build brick by brick.

For the next five years Gandhi seemingly retired from active agitational politics and devoted himself to the propagation of what he regarded as the basic national needs, the real foundation of independence, of which the message was to be carried to the masses in the villages. These were, among others, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, equal rights for women, and the restoration or reconstruction of village economy, with particular emphasis on hand-spinning, so as to provide employment to the largest number of people. 'I am not interested,' he had said, 'in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever.' The two movements, for political freedom and for social and economic rights, must be so integrated as to go hand in hand.

The Congress ranks had also come to be divided. There were the Swarajists led by such constitutional stalwarts as Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das who wanted to carry on the struggle from within the new legislatures set up under the Reforms Act; and there were the No-changers who were content to follow the Mahatma into wilderness. Not wishing to cause a permanent schism in the Congress ranks or to stand in the way of the Swarajists, Gandhi voluntarily retired from the active political platform which now turned into a forum of wits and words. He was not interested in legal duels and verbal fireworks. He was glad of this respite, for he needed time and scope to put into practice the ideas he had so immaturely and aggressively aired in his *Hind Swaraj* in 1909. At that time he had waxed lyrical over India's village economy without having ever seen for himself what a spinning wheel was like. So he honestly confessed later.

But his instinct was sound and his intuitive diagnosis of the major disease of modern industrial civilization was unerring, however intemperately argued. He had then peremptorily and majestically dismissed all science and machinery as evil and had ridiculed parliamentary democracy and compared the British Parliament to 'a sterile woman and a prostitute'. Although years later he insisted that he stood by everything he had then said and would 'withdraw nothing except one word of it, and that in deference to a lady friend' (he was probably referring to the use of the word, prostitute), he had, in fact, travelled a great deal away from his earlier rigid and almost fanatic stand. He had, for example, pleaded in the meanwhile for a system of parliamentary democracy for India, he had exhibited enough faith in science to undergo an operation by a British surgeon, he had even waxed eloquent over the Singer Sewing Machine for saving the housewife much drudgery.

A born as well as a trained advocate of whatever he happened to advocate for the time being, he thus replied in 1924 to a question whether he was against all machinery: 'How can I be when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning wheel is a machine, a little toothpick is a machine. What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on "saving labour" till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions.'

Who can quarrel with a plea of such universal humanism? It was the same with his concept of the Divine. When he found it inconvenient to maintain that God is Truth, he quietly reversed the formula and proclaimed that Truth is God. Not even an atheist could quarrel with that. It was a dominant quality of Gandhi's personality that being truly creative, it was growing all the time, revealing new facets and attaining new dimensions. He was never a prisoner in a cage of his own make.

And so he made a full and creative use of the five years' respite from the hurly-burly of political agitation—what Rabindranath Tagore had earlier described as the whistling of an engine without its moving.

A Creative Respite

GANDHI HAD the singular power of applying his mind with the same concentrated zeal to the smallest as to the biggest task. Planning a national campaign to paralyse the Government machinery or experimenting with the best use of organic manure had for him the same sanctity and importance. He enjoyed both operations with equal zest. The seemingly idle years of retirement were far from sterile. They were filled with activity, silent, unobtrusive, lacking in dramatic excitement, but nonetheless of great national utility. Gandhi could be as revolutionary with the spade as with the sword.

This period amply demonstrated that his basic attitudes and beliefs had not undergone any radical change; only their surface crudities and angularities had been rubbed off with time and experience. He had believed and he continued to believe till the last that man's true worth consists in his moral evolution, and not in mechanical efficiency, which, indeed, might become diabolical and in the end destroy him if not restrained by moral idealism; that true civilization is based on love, tolerance and understanding, and not on envy, rivalry and violence; that what is enjoyed by depriving others of their dues is stolen from them and therefore a form of robbery.

The ideal state and society, according to him, was one where authority as well as economy were decentralized among more or less self-sufficient village units or republics and all men and women worked with their hands, on land or at a craft. Each colony or ashram that Gandhi organized, whether in South Africa or India, was an experiment to realize the rudiments of such a society and a training camp for a corps of workers who would carry this message and work it out in the innumerable Indian villages, sunk in misery and torpor, 'dung-hills', as he called them.

'Sooner or later it will be realized,' wrote Aldous Huxley after Gandhi's death, 'that this dreamer had his feet firmly planted on the ground, that this idealist was the most practical of men. For Gandhi's social and economic ideas are based upon a realistic appraisal of man's nature and the nature of his position in the universe. He knew, on the one hand, that the cumulative triumphs of advancing organization and progressive technology cannot alter the basic fact that man is an animal of no great size and, in most cases, of very modest abilities. And, on the other hand, he knew that these physical and intellectual limitations are compatible with a practically infinite capacity for spiritual progress...

'For this amphibious being on the border-line between the animal and the spiritual, what sort of social, political and economic arrangements are the most appropriate? To this question Gandhi gave a simple and eminently sensible answer. Men, he said, should do their actual living and working in communities of a size commensurate with their bodily and moral stature, communities small enough to permit of genuine self-government and the assumption of personal responsibilities, federated into large units in such a way that the temptation to abuse great power should not arise. The larger a democracy grows, the less real becomes the rule of the people and the smaller is the say of individuals and localized groups in deciding their destinies...

'Decentralization in economics must go hand in hand with decentralization in politics. Individuals, families and small co-operative groups should own the land and instruments necessary for their own subsistence and for supplying a local market. Among the necessary instruments of production Gandhi wished to include only hand tools.'

In other ways, too, this seemingly idle and sterile period in Gandhi's political career proved to be one of the most fruitful and creative of his life. It was during this respite that he began the writing of his Autobiography or, as he preferred to call it, *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, in weekly instalments which were published serially in the original Gujarati and were translated into English by Mahadev Desai, assisted by others.

It was also during this period that Gandhi's English devotee, Madeleine Slade, more popularly known in India as Mira Behn, came to him at the Sabarmati Ashram. 'As I entered, a slight brown figure rose up and came towards me. I was conscious of nothing but a sense of light. I fell on my knees. Hands gently raised me up, and a voice said, "You shall be my daughter." My consciousness of the physical world began to return, and I saw a face smiling at me with eyes full of love, blended with a gentle twinkle of amusement. Yes, this was Mahatma Gandhi, and I had arrived.'

Several incidents of this interregnum are of considerable significance as throwing light on some aspect or other of Gandhi's ever-evolving thought and his way of dealing with situations as they arose. There was, for example, the case of stray dogs covered with mange with which the city of Ahmedabad was infested. Despite the obvious horror and hazard of this increasing menace, such was the orthodox sentiment of the people that the Municipal authorities dared not put the dogs out of their misery. At last a group of progressive citizens came to Gandhi and sought his advice. He advised that the poor creatures be shot and laid to rest. The shooting was carried out, raising a storm of indignant protests which Gandhi disposed of in his own serene, inimitable fashion.

A more serious test was the case of one of the Ashram heifers which was ill and in great pain. The veterinary surgeon had declared her past all cure. The heifer lay on one side, unable to move, and as it was a big one, she could not be lifted about so as to prevent bed sores. She could take no nourishment and was being tormented by flies. Although in this case the sanctity of the cow was involved—a sanctity in which Gandhi professed belief—he now made up his mind 'that true *ahimsa* required him to put the heifer out of her misery by having her killed in as painless a way as possible.' So a doctor was called. 'Then Bapu (Gandhi was called Bapu or Father, and Mrs Gandhi Ba or Mother, by inmates of the Ashram and others close to them) stooped down,' relates Mira Behn who was an eye-witness, 'and gently held for a moment one of the heifer's front legs, the syringe was applied, there was a spasm, and the heifer was dead. No one spoke. Bapu took a cloth and spread it over the heifer's face, and then walked silently back to his room.'

During this period, too, he travelled widely over India, preaching rebellion, not against the Government, but against poverty, against ignorance, against the curse of untouchability. At one meeting where he saw the untouchables segregated in a distant corner, he walked over to their midst and addressed the meeting from there, thereby turning the tables on the orthodox and 'respectable' part of the audience.

On the March

GRADUALLY THE mood of the nation underwent a radical change. The earlier frustration was replaced by an almost aggressive self-assertion. The rise of the Youth Movement, the irruption of agrarian discontent, the challenge of the Terrorists in Bengal and the Punjab on the one hand, and of the Marxists on the other, and the failure of the much talked-of Swarajist experiment in constitutional agitation had all contributed to it. The appointment by the British Government of the Simon Commission to review the working of the 1919 Reforms, without an Indian member on it, had provided the nation with a ready-made incentive for massive demonstrations. The six-year term to which Gandhi had been sentenced at the famous trial in 1922 had run its course, and although Gandhi had been unconditionally released four years earlier and the sentence had automatically lapsed, he had felt morally obliged not to use the freedom gained through an accident of illness for political purposes.

By 1929 the various groups in the Congress had once again rallied together, itching for action and looking up to the Mahatma for leadership. When on the last day of the year he himself moved the Resolution in the Congress session declaring complete independence as the goal of national policy, it was obvious that he was again ready to lead the people in an open challenge to British rule. He drafted the pledge of *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence which was solemnly taken by millions throughout the country on 26 January 1930, which day has since been observed as Independence Day. All eyes now turned to Sabarmati. What will the wizard of non-violence do next?

On 12 March 1930, with seventy-eight members of his Ashram, of both sexes, trailing behind, Gandhi began the historic 24-day march to the sea beach at Dandi to break the law which had deprived the poor man of his right to make his own salt. He had earlier given due notice to the Viceroy of what he was going to do. The Viceroy must have smiled in amused derision. It seemed a trivial, theatrical and silly act of bravado to walk for 24 days and make a little lump of crude salt by drying the sea water. But the little man in the loin cloth was a wizard who could intuitively gauge the dramatic impact of this seemingly trivial gesture. The villagers flocked from miles around to kneel by the roadside to see this unarmed man of God walk past. The imagination of the people had caught the spark and by the time the march had ended, a glow of heightened excitement, as at the approach of a great adventure, had spread over the nation from end to end.

In the early morning of 6 April the Mahatma, after prayers, walked over to the beach and picked up a little lump of salt left behind by the receding waves. This simple act of symbolic defiance was followed by a nation-wide challenge to the law. Men and women, young and old, simple villagers and sophisticated city folk, marched in thousands to invite arrest, police beatings and even shooting in many cases. Gandhi himself was arrested on 4 May, soon after midnight. Within a few weeks about a hundred thousand men and women were in jail. The mighty machine of the British Government was screeching out of gear.

When the First Round Table Conference met in London in November 1930, the Labour Government was faced with the embarrassing situation of discussing the future constitutional set-up in India with 'representatives' of India—without the Indian National Congress. While the many vested interests were more than adequately represented, there was none to speak for the national aspirations of the people. The anomaly was too obvious to be ignored. At the closing session of the Conference on 19 January 1931 the Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald had expressed the hope that the Congress would find it possible to participate in the Second Round Table Conference. Gandhi and some of his top colleagues were therefore unconditionally released a week later, on 26 January, exactly a year after the first independence pledge was taken.

Soon after, Gandhi was invited by the Viceroy Lord Irwin for talks—to the disgust of Winston Churchill who was scandalized at 'the nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one-time Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceroy's palace, there to negotiate a parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor.'

But Lord Irwin obviously thought differently. Recapitulating the episode twentyfive years later, he, then Lord Halifax, said, 'I have every reason to have great respect and regard for the name of that very remarkable little man.'

Mira Behn has recalled an amusing anecdote which throws a sidelight on Gandhi's characteristic way of dealing alike with the great and the small: 'On one occasion, when the afternoon discussions had been much prolonged, a message came for me to take Bapu's food to him at Viceroy's House. In those days Bapu's diet was chiefly dates and milk, while the vessels in which this food was served were ordinary jail utensils which he had obtained as a memento when he left Yeravda Jail. I hurriedly put these things together in a basket and proceeded to Viceroy's House...The Viceroy was watching with interest and when Bapu began scooping out the dates with his spoon, Lord Irwin inquired what it was he was eating. "The Prophet's food," said Bapu with a smile, and the Viceroy got up and peeped into the pot to see what he meant. "And this is my jail pot," added Bapu, proudly tapping his tankard with his spoon.'

Interlude in the West

In March 1931 the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed, and on 29 August Gandhi sailed for London to attend the Second Round Table Conference as the sole delegate of the Congress. The intervening weeks were full of uncertainty and tension, for Lord Irwin's successor, Lord Willingdon, was a typical Tory diehard and lacked his predecessor's imagination and sincerity. 'There is every chance of my returning empty-handed,' remarked Gandhi as he boarded the P. & O. liner, as a deck passenger.

In London he stayed at Kingsley Hall in the East End, as the guest of Muriel Lester. He felt at home in that social service centre of London's poor district, surrounded by the working folk whose hearts he immediately won over. His informality, kindliness and humour broke down the barriers of national and racial prejudice. Even his unconventional dress ceased to shock the prude. When asked why he chose to wear only a loin-cloth, he replied, 'You people wear plus-fours, mine are minus-fours.' The mini-dress had not yet come into vogue, or else he would have smilingly claimed credit for being the innovator of a new fashion.

Much to the apprehension of the British authorities he insisted on visiting Lancashire where his own campaign of Indian boycott of foreign cloth had resulted in considerable unemployment. He saw the hardship of the unemployed mill operatives and listened with sympathy to what he was told. He said to them: 'You have 3 million unemployed, but we have nearly 300 million unemployed and underemployed for half the year. Your average unemployment dole is 70 shillings. Our average income is 7 shillings and 6 pence a month... Imagine therefore what a calamity it must be to have 300 million unemployed, several million becoming degraded every day for want of employment, devoid of self-respect, devoid of faith in God. I dare not take before them the message of God . . . I can take before them a message of God only by taking the sacred message of work before them. It is good enough to talk of God whilst we are sitting here after a nice breakfast and looking forward to a nicer luncheon, but how am I to talk of God to the millions who have to go without two meals a day? To them God can only appear as bread and butter.'

After hearing him one of the unemployed said, 'I am one of the unemployed, but if I was in India I would say the same thing that Mr Gandhi is saying.' Everywhere in Lancashire, recalled Mira Behn who had accompanied him, the crowds gathered to welcome him and listen to him with warmth of feeling and appreciation.

So far as the political mission of Gandhi's visit was concerned, his earlier foreboding proved correct. He had to leave the shore of Britain 'empty-handed'. Nevertheless, the incidental side-effects of his personal contacts with people of England were by and large productive of good results. The earlier Mr Gandhi who had visited England four times before and had walked the streets in the conventional dress of a pre-War English gentleman, in a well-cut morning coat and silk hat, was hardly remembered. The Mahatma or the 'half-naked seditious fakir' who had arrived now was become a legend, and fantastic stories, some kindly, some unkindly, had spread about him. It was good therefore for the common British people to see and measure for themselves the charm of his personality, his universal sympathies, his lively humour and infectious laughter.

Two sculptors, Winston Churchill's niece Clare Sheridan who had sculptured Lenin's head in 1920 and was later to do her uncle's, and the American Joe Davidson, made studies of Gandhi's head while he sat spinning or meeting people at the Knightsbridge house where he spent the hours in between the Conference sittings at St. James's Palace. It is interesting to recall what Clare Sheridan had to say of the three eminent contemporaries—dynamic personalities who changed the course of history in their respective continents and who were each so different from the other—whose heads she studied:

'In the case of Lenin and Churchill there is a curious similarity of skull construction: great domes contain their brains, and there is an unusual flatness of the back of the cranium.

'Gandhi, whom I place in the first rank of contemporary greatness, is also comparable with Lenin but in a different way, that is to say, spiritual rather than physical or intellectual.

'To me, Gandhi and Lenin represent symbols of sincerity and truth. Neither of these men were capable of the slightest deviation from their ideals. Lenin and Gandhi were uncompromisingly outspoken, and supremely indifferent to the effect they created. Truth was all that counted.

'To my mind, Gandhi's greatness is spiritual, and for this reason he is greater, more formidable than any of the famous men of today. He has a spiritual awareness which humanity must develop if the world is ever to be raised out of the hell of its own making.

'My estimate of Gandhi was corroborated by my friend and rival, the American sculptor, Joe Davidson, who also "collects" heads! He told me that the "great" always seem to him so small when he gets close up to them, all except Gandhi, the only one who retained his greatness.'

After a night's halt and a crowded public meeting in Paris on his return journey, Gandhi spent five days at Villeneuve as Romain Rolland's guest. Romain Rolland was the second European biographer of Gandhi. Both he and his predecessor, Joseph Doke, had written with uncommon insight. But while Doke had watched his activities closely in Johannesburg, the French author had neither seen Gandhi nor visited India when he wrote his little masterpiece. And yet he showed an understanding as subtle as it was deep. 'Gandhi is a Tolstoy,' wrote Rolland who was also a great admirer of the Russian sage, 'in a more gentle, appeased, and, if I dared, I would say, in a more Christian sense, for Tolstoy is not so much a Christian by nature as by force of will.'

Now they met for the first time and, as it happened, for the only time. The Frenchman's loving and amused description of that first glimpse, as conveyed to a friend in America, is worth reproducing: 'The little man, bespectacled and toothless, was wrapped in his white burnoose, but his legs, thin as a heron's stilts, were bare. His shaven head with its few coarse hairs was uncovered and wet with rain. He came to me with a dry laugh, his mouth open like a good dog panting, and flinging an arm around me leaned his cheek against my shoulder. I felt his grizzled head against my cheek. It was, I amuse myself thinking, the kiss of Saint Dominic and Saint Francis.'

Romain Rolland goes on to refer to 'the hurricane of intruders, loiterers, and half-wits which this visit loosed on our two villas. No, the telephone never ceased ringing; photographers in ambuscades let fly their fusillades from behind every bush. The milkmen's syndicate at Leman informed me that during all the time of this sojourn with me of the "King of India" they intended to assume complete responsibility for his "victualing". We received letters from "Sons of God". Some Italians wrote to the Mahatma beseeching him to indicate for them the ten lucky numbers for the next drawing of the weekly national lottery! My sister, having survived, has gone to take ten days' rest at a cure in Zurich ... For my part, I have entirely lost the gift of sleep. If you find it, send it to me by registered mail.'

If Gandhi was tired he showed no sign of it, and kept all his engagements with his usual unflagging zeal and good humour. 'This little man, so frail in appearance,' noted his host, 'is tireless, and fatigue is a word which does not exist in his vocabulary.' It was during this stay that Gandhi told a gathering at Lausanne that while formerly he said that 'God is Truth', he had now come to believe that 'Truth is God. For even the atheists do not doubt the necessity for the power of truth. In their passion for discovering the truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the existence of God, and, from their point of view, they are right.'

In Rome Gandhi failed to meet the Pope, though Mussolini received him with courtesy. Earlier in London Winston Churchill had declined to receive him. But Gandhi was unperturbed. He took honour and rebuff with equal detachment. He, however, visited the Vatican where he was deeply impressed by a life-size crucifix. 'He immediately went up to it and stood there in deep contemplation,' recalled Mira Behn. 'Then he moved a little this way and that way, so as to see it from various angles, and finally went around behind it and the wall, where there was hardly room to go, and looked up at it from the back. He remained perfectly silent, and it was only when we left that he spoke, and then as if still in contemplation—"That was a very wonderful crucifix"—and again silence.'

How did he fare with Mussolini and what did he think of the Italian dictator? Unlike Tagore who had been temporarily taken in, Gandhi kept his head. When Mussolini asked him what he thought of his State, Gandhi said without mincing words that the dictator was building a house of cards. Later he recalled in Yeravda Jail that Mussolini looked 'like the executioner'. He added, 'How long will a rule based on bayonets last?'

Christmas Gifts

ARRIVING IN Bombay three days after Christmas, Gandhi said: 'I am not conscious of a single experience throughout my three months' stay in England and Europe that made me feel that after all East is East and West is West. On the contrary, I have been convinced more than ever that human nature is much the same, no matter under what clime it flourishes, and that if you approached people with trust and affection you would have tenfold trust and thousandfold affection returned to you.'

But the immediate experience that awaited him hardly justified such optimism. Nor was this the first time that he realized with sorrow that the Englishman in South Africa or India was very different from the Englishman at home. Even before his arrival in India the basis of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact had been destroyed by the high-handed and repressive regime of Irwin's successor, Willingdon. India was being ruled by Ordinances; shootings and arrests had become the order of the day.

Jawaharlal Nehru who was coming to Bombay to receive Gandhi was arrested on the way. 'I take it,' commented the Mahatma, 'that these are Christmas gifts from Lord Willingdon, our Christian Viceroy.' A week later Gandhi himself was arrested and locked up, without trial, in Yeravda Jail, Poona.

This time he was not 'happy as a bird' as he formerly was behind the prison bars, for he had a premonition of the British Government's sinister design to extend the scope of the separate electorates and thereby break the nation into pieces in the ostensible interest of the 'minorities'. Behind the well-meaning facade of a Labour Prime Minister, the British diehards would be more callous than ever.

His private secretary Mahadev Desai, who was fortunately allowed to be incarcerated with him, has recorded with Boswellian fidelity Gandhi's daily conversations and correspondence, which throw much light on the changes which his social and moral attitudes were undergoing steadily, though almost imperceptibly. Here are some entries :

'Manu (daughter of Gandhi's eldest son Harilal who had by now gone astray) wrote informing Bapu how her maternal aunt Balibehn slapped her (Manu's) ne'er-do-well father. Bapu replied that she had done the right thing; there was no *himsa* (violence) but pure love in her act.'

'Bapu used to write the *tithi* (day of the Hindu lunar month) only and was annoyed if he saw anybody using the date according to the Western calendar. But now he has given up *tithis* and says, "The European calendar has been accepted by the whole world, and we cannot have any hatred for it."'

'In reply to a letter of Parchure Shastri (who suffered from leprosy), asking if a man had the right to give up life when it became only a burdensome and painful thing, Bapu wrote : "My opinion on that point is as follows. A man who is suffering from an incurable disease and is living thanks to service rendered to him by others without himself doing anything useful in return has the right to end his life. To fast unto death would be much better for him than to drown himself, for it tests his firmness and leaves room for him to change his mind."'

In reply to Mira Behn who had written to him from another jail where she had been kept with common criminals, he wrote: 'You mention criminals as your companions now. The word criminal should be taboo from our dictionary. Or we are all criminals. "Those of you that are without sin cast the first stone." And no one was found to dare cast the stone at the sinning harlot. As a jailer once said, all are criminals in secret. There is profound truth in that saying, uttered half in jest.'

Again: 'You must not accuse yourself of want of faith in me or my wisdom because you do not see a point of mine at once or because having seen it you cannot agree with me. I am not a perfect being. Why should you see eye to eye with me in my errors? That would be blind faith.'

And thus the days passed. Gandhi's apprehensions were borne out when in August 1932 the Communal Award was announced providing separate electorates for the 'untouchables'. Gandhi immediately wrote to the British Prime Minister reminding him that he (Gandhi) had declared at the Round Table Conference that he would resist with his life any such measure by which 'untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity', and announced his intention to go on a fast unto death, if the decision were not reversed.

The fast was to begin on 20 September. In the early hours of that morning he wrote to Rabindranath Tagore: 'This is early morning, 3 o'clock of Tuesday. I enter the fiery gates at noon. If you can bless the effort I want it. You have been a true friend because you have been a candid friend.' Even as he handed the letter to be mailed, Tagore's telegram reached his hand. 'It is worth sacrificing the precious life for the sake of India's unity and her social integrity... Our sorrowing hearts will follow your sublime penance with reverence and love.'

Tagore's words expressed the nation's feeling. The 'fiery gates' which the Mahatma voluntarily entered scorched the heart of the Hindu community, rousing its slumbering conscience. Millions suddenly realized, as never before, that they shared the guilt for the curse of untouchability, and if Gandhi died during the penance, the sin of causing his death would be on the heads of all. After five days of tense national suspense, the leaders of the caste Hindus and of the so-called untouchables, whom Gandhi had christened as Harijans or children of God, signed a pact under which the right of separate electorates was given up for an increased share of reserved seats for Harijans. This was acceptable to Gandhi, and on the following day when Gandhi's condition was causing anxiety to the doctors came the news that the British Government had accepted the new formula. In the afternoon of the same day Gandhi broke the fast, in the presence of several friends and admirers, including the poet

Tagore who had hurried from Santiniketan and who sang for him a hymn from *Gitanjali*.

Poets, saints and social reformers had for centuries condemned the evil of untouchability in Hindu society, but if any single act could be said to have broken the back of this evil, it was this fast. Even before it had ended, caste Hindus and Harijans were publicly fraternizing in the streets of many cities, and many an orthodox temple was for the first time thrown open to these 'children of God'.

Gandhi had earlier told a group of journalists who had come to see him on the evening of the day he commenced the fast: 'If people won't laugh at me, I would gently put forward a claim which I have always asserted, that I am a "touchable" by birth, but an "untouchable" by choice, and I have endeavoured to qualify myself to represent, not the upper ten even among the "untouchables", because be it said to their shame there are castes and classes among them, but my ambition is to represent and identify myself with, as far as possible, the lowest strata of the "untouchables", namely, the "invisibles" and the "unapproachables", whom I have always before my mind's eye wherever I go; for they have indeed drunk deep of the poisoned cup. I have met them in Malabar and in Orissa, and I am convinced that if they are ever to rise, it will not be by reservation of seats but will be by the strenuous work of Hindu reformers in their midst, and it is because I feel that this separation would have killed all prospect of reform that my whole soul has rebelled against it; and let me make it plain that the withdrawal of separate electorates will satisfy the letter of my vow but will not satisfy the spirit behind it, and in my capacity of being a self-chosen "untouchable" I am not going to rest content with a patched-up pact between "touchables" and "untouchables".'

A Hostage

REFERRING TO the Poona Pact, Gandhi had declared, 'I assure my Harijan friends, as I would henceforth like to name them, that they may hold my life as a hostage for its due fulfilment.' And so, while still a prisoner, he concentrated all his energies on practical steps to keep this assurance.

For Gandhi to think was to resolve; to resolve was to act. Whatever he did, he did in the religious spirit and with religious zeal. A few months earlier, replying to a correspondent who had suggested that he should give up politics and devote himself to preaching the truths common to Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, he had written: 'I do not conceive religion as one of the many activities of mankind. The same activity may be governed by the spirit either of religion or of irreligion. There is no such thing for me therefore as leaving politics for religion. For me every, the tiniest, activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion.'

In the words of one of Gandhi's biographers: 'One of the greatest campaigns of social reform in history was thus launched by a state prisoner.' At first the authorities allowed him facilities for carrying on this work from inside the jail, hoping, no doubt, that thereby the nation's attention would be diverted from political agitation to social reform. A separate organization to be exclusively devoted to the service of the Harijans was set up, and a new weekly, named *Harijan*, edited by Gandhi himself, was launched. The days of the earlier weekly, *Young India*, as also of the Sabarmati Ashram, had numbered. *Young India* ceased to exist and Gandhi never returned to his Ashram on the bank of Sabarmati. When he had left it on 12 March 1930, to begin his famous Salt March, he had said to himself that he would not re-enter its gates until his country was freed from the foreign yoke. So the Ashram too was later handed over to the Society (Harijan Sewak Sangh) he had set up for the welfare of the outcastes.

Untouchability was so ancient and deep-seated a disease of the Hindu society that it could not be eliminated by a mere effusion of public goodwill, however sincere, and with the limited means available to Gandhi in jail. But Gandhi was impatient, as he often became when he had espoused a new and seemingly sacred cause. The Government, on the other hand, was not willing to oblige him with unrestricted facilities beyond a certain limit, for he was after all still a prisoner and could be more formidable as a prisoner than as a free man.

And so began—to use Gandhi's own phrase—an 'undignified cat-and-mouse game', Gandhi periodically going on a fast or threatening to do so, and the Government releasing him and again locking him up, not knowing which way was less fraught with danger. Finally, in August 1933, the Government fed up and at its wit's end released him unconditionally. Gandhi responded chivalrously by imposing on himself a ban against any form of civil disobedience for the remaining term of one year's imprisonment to which he had been sentenced shortly before.

He now shifted his headquarters from Ahmedabad to Wardha in Central India. But instead of allowing himself a much-needed rest in one place he set out on an extensive tour to propagate his new mission and to collect funds for the cause. 'So on and on we went,' recorded Mira Behn who accompanied him, 'with everywhere crowds, enthusiasm and overflowing affection. This was in itself a tonic to Bapu, who had been so long divided from the masses, and enabled him to bear the unceasing strain.' Part of the tour in Orissa was done on foot.

The tour had to be interrupted in March 1934, for his presence was needed in Bihar where a severe earthquake had caused great havoc. Untouchability being the latest bee in his bonnet, the Mahatma promptly ascribed this great calamity to divine wrath provoked by the sin of untouchability. So preposterous seemed this arbitrary and fanciful interpretation of God's will that Tagore felt constrained to protest against it publicly, gently suggesting that the priestly tactic of working up a baseless superstitious fear in the name of divine vengeance was hardly worthy of the Mahatma. Such casuistry was a double-edged weapon which could, with equal plausibility, be used by his opponents against his own campaign.

But the Mahatma, when he so chose, could be very obstinate, and he had a way of lifting an argument to a plane where logic and commonsense cannot reach. He reiterated his faith with such passionate sincerity that rational argument could avail little against it. 'I confess my utter ignorance of the laws of nature,' he wrote in *Harijan*. 'But even as I cannot help believing in God though I am unable to prove His existence to the sceptics, in like manner, I cannot prove the connection of the sin of untouchability with the Bihar visitation even though the connection is instinctively felt by me. If my belief turns out to be ill-founded, it will still have done good for me and those who believe with me. For we shall have been spurred to more vigorous efforts towards self-purification, assuming, of course, that untouchability is a deadly sin.'

Whatever be the logic behind it, who can find fault with so humane a sentiment!

For the next few years Gandhi settled down in a mud hut in a village near Wardha and gave his main thought and energy to the uplift of Harijans and the development and propagation of his country's rural economy, including education. 'India lives in her villages,' he said, 'not in her cities. When I succeed in ridding the villages of their poverty, I have won Swaraj.' Although his ideas were never static and were constantly evolving, the underlying base remained the same. The base was self-help. Individuals and communities develop truly and best to the extent they draw their strength from their native resources.

Gandhi had formally resigned his membership of the Congress and often said that he was not even a 4-anna member of the

Party. But the Congress could not afford to leave him alone. During a similar phase a decade earlier when he had seemingly withdrawn from active political leadership, he was persuaded to accept Presidentship of the Congress for 1925. He had done so in the hope of reorienting the Congress ideology and strategy to make the organization a more effective instrument for mass contact, or service of the masses, as he preferred to put it. So now, too, Sevagram, the village where he had built his cottage, became a centre of political pilgrimage, as Sabarmati was earlier. Nor did he ever disdain to give advice when it was sought, and it was unceasingly sought.

Indeed, Gandhi's seeming retirement from the active political scene was more strategic than real. It was in a way a periodic retreat which allowed him freedom and scope to build up and train reserves of his own from which he could draw his forces when required. His military strategy, if a non-violent technique could be so described, was to turn every village into a stronghold of self-reliant economy and disciplined moral courage such that the ruling authority, whether foreign or native, would be automatically paralysed if it went against the wishes of the people.

This was the very opposite of the strategy of guerrilla-sabotage which is held in high admiration today in all ex-colonial countries. Unfortunately, the way of Gandhi needed more patience, more faith and more courage than his people were prepared for. And so its effectiveness was never adequately demonstrated. It remained and remains and will perhaps always remain a dream.

Into the Maelstrom

WITH THE outbreak of the War in 1939, Gandhi was dragged back into the political maelstrom. He was not the man to sit back and shirk responsibility when danger threatened his people and a crisis seemed imminent. He had never sought his God in the temple or church, but always in the dust of the road or battle-field. With the world in flames, what was his duty now? To try to quench the flames, if he could, or to add to the conflagration—so that all the dumped rubbish of the past that choked the present may be burnt up into clean ashes, as said one of Tagore's famous songs? That was his dilemma.

He had loyally supported the British Empire in the First World War. Earlier, at the turn of the century, he had offered his services to the Empire in the Boer War, even though his personal sympathy was with the Boer cause. Since then his outlook had undergone a radical transformation in two respects. He had totally lost his respect and affection for the British Empire as such, although he retained respect and affection for British people as individual men and women. He had also totally lost faith in war, for whatever reason waged. He had ceased to believe that any good can ever come of men slaughtering men. While, as he put it, 'my sympathies are wholly with the Allies', he had come to believe 'all war to be wholly wrong'.

He had always maintained that to die without killing was the highest form of bravery. Despite this faith in non-violence, he had earlier gone about recruiting fighting soldiers for the British Empire. There was room for a certain flexibility, or even ambivalence, in his mental attitude which enabled him to stress different aspects, sometimes seemingly contrary, at different times. Even while he preached absolute non-violence, he had repeatedly stressed, 'Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I advise violence.'

He had been considerably heartened by the rough war-like Pathans of the North-west Frontier voluntarily taking to non-violence under the leadership of Abdul Gaffar Khan, known on that account as the Frontier Gandhi. During his visit in 1938 he had said to them: 'If you have understood the power of non-violence, you ought to feel the stronger for having put away your arms . . . If, however, you have not understood the secret of this strength, if, as a result of renouncing arms, you feel weak instead of stronger than before, it would be better for you to give up the profession of non-violence.'

There were many in the Congress and outside Congress who felt that this was the hour to strike, since Britain's difficulty was India's opportunity, as is the trite, oft-repeated formula of the worldly wise. But to Gandhi such an attitude seemed immoral and inconsistent with the Congress creed. 'We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin,' he said. 'That is not the way of non-violence.' On the other hand, he was fully aware of the moral anomaly in Britain's claim to fight for freedom and democracy in Europe, while betraying the same principles in the case of India.

Gandhi was torn between his anguish at the holocaust in Europe, his sympathy for the fallen France, his admiration of the British fighting doggedly with their back to the wall, and his despair at the cussedness of their Government whose indifference to the aspirations and welfare of India was driving her people to increasing bitterness and desperation. 'I have become disconsolate,' he confessed. 'In the secret of my heart I am in perpetual quarrel with God that He should allow such things to go on.'

The majority of Congress leaders would have welcomed participation in the war effort, and indeed offered it, provided India could do so as an equal partner with Britain. Gandhi did not believe in conditional non-violence, but he was realistic enough to know that he could not carry the majority of his colleagues, who were at best patriot-politicians not saints, along his own thorny path of total renunciation of violence. Nor was he vain enough to insist that the Party should accept his creed *in toto* as the price of his leadership, though he was aware that in the face of the imminent crisis the Party could not do without him and would have no alternative but to accept his conditions, were he so to insist. But he wisely and graciously effaced himself and advised the nation to endorse the official Congress stand of full participation in the Allied war effort, provided Britain recognized India's right of self-government without reservations.

He was accused of being inconsistent; the more so as he had about the same time launched his campaign of Individual Satyagraha by which select individuals were to move round the country, publicly repeating: 'It is wrong to help the British war effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance.' But such taunts had little relevance for one who had repeatedly maintained: 'My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result is that I have grown from truth to truth.'

But while Gandhi might have grown from truth to truth, the nation was sinking from misery to misery, and Britain was reeling from disaster to disaster. Unable to stem the seemingly irresistible tide of Japanese advance in South-east Asia and unwilling to alienate American sympathy, Winston Churchill was obliged to depute his Socialist colleague in the War Cabinet, Sir Stafford Cripps, to India with a 'Draft Declaration' intended to satisfy the nationalist aspirations as well as to reconcile the various conflicting interests, subject to the overriding exigencies of the British war effort.

Sir Stafford Cripps seemed at the time a happy choice for the mission. He was an anti-imperialist whose professed sympathy with Indian aspirations was well known, a Socialist whose diplomatic skill had been tested in a difficult assignment in

Soviet Russia. He was personally known to Nehru and other Indian leaders, had been a colleague of Jinnah's in the legal profession, and being a strict vegetarian, devout Christian and a man of austere living might be expected to win immediate access to Gandhi's heart. He was able and astute, amiable and friendly, convinced of the righteousness of his mission and confident of its success.

Unfortunately, he had underestimated the hurdles he had to face. In the prevailing atmosphere of mutual suspicion and bitterness, it was an almost impossible task to reconcile the aims of the Congress with the claims of the Muslim League and both with the interests of the Princes, and ensure at the same time adequate safeguards for unhampered prosecution of the war under British command.

It was a mission with a built-in failure. The fact was that India was treated as an appendage to Britain; its real interests did not matter to the rulers. Churchill was concerned with the prosecution of war and it seemed desirable to coax India to bleed for the benefit of Britain. India must be the major blood-donor. So far as the future of India was concerned, the British Government had not made up its mind. It was sitting on the fence and watching the volcano simmer. In this respect Churchill showed no more vision or courage than had been shown by his predecessor Chamberlain in respect of the volcano in Europe.

However happy the British Cabinet's choice of Cripps as the negotiator, the mission itself was conceived and hatched under unhappy auspices. Cripps had to function under a double handicap from the very beginning. There was, on the one hand, a general feeling of cynicism among Indians that Britain was making a belated gesture of friendship, not out of goodwill and grace but in fear of the Japanese threat. On the other hand was the ill-disguised hostility of the Viceroy and the British administration in India to the idea of any effective transfer of power to any other hands.

Nor was it easy to believe that the British Prime Minister who had never cared to disguise his inveterate disdain of Gandhi and the Congress and who had earlier proudly declared that he had not become 'the King's First Minister in order to preside at the liquidation of the British Empire', could really wish Cripps to succeed in his mission. Cynics were not wanting who suggested that Churchill had deliberately sent Cripps on this hopeless mission in the hope that its failure would discredit a possible rival, while providing plausible evidence for the benefit of Churchill's English and American critics that the Indian leadership was hopelessly unrealistic, unreasonable and unreliable. What was at the back of Churchill's mind and why the mission failed so dismally is a question to which more than one answer has been and could be given.

Whatever the truth, the unfortunate fact was that the situation had been vitiated by the bungling and callousness of the British authorities in India, the moral and military prestige of Britain had sunk low, and the atmosphere was full of mistrust and fear. Under the circumstances no creative solution was perhaps possible at the time. Even Gandhi, who always made a virtue of trusting his adversary and believed in mending rather than ending, had grown so disillusioned and embittered that after a single meeting with Cripps he advised him to take the next plane home.

Indian leaders harboured a grudge that Cripps had let them down; Cripps returned the compliment by feeling the same about them. Who let down whom, it is difficult to say. The circumstances had let down everyone.

Quit India

THE FAILURE of Cripps Mission hastened the drift to frustration on all sides. The deterioration from bad to worse was rapid. The Japanese had almost crossed the border and were poised for an offensive. For millions of Indians, specially in the eastern zone, the Japanese threat was overborne by the exhilarating thought that their beloved hero Subhas Chandra Bose was coming to deliver them. Meanwhile, Jinnah and the Muslim League were encouraged by the stalemate to make their demand for a separate Muslim State more vociferous and insistent.

In this desperate predicament of menace from without and danger from within, Gandhi felt more and more convinced that the nation could face the twofold crisis only if the British withdrew their stranglehold and left India, as he put it, to God, and, if it came to that, to anarchy. Nothing could be more demoralizing or degrading than the prevailing mood of helplessness, cynicism and bitterness. He feared that if this resentment and impatience were not given an organized and disciplined non-violent expression in some form of planned satyagraha, it would break out in widespread and uncontrolled disorder and violence.

'The original idea of asking the British to go burst upon me suddenly,' he confided to Louis Fischer. 'It was the Cripps fiasco that inspired the idea. Hardly had he gone, when it seized hold of me.' Soon after, he had occasion to elaborate the idea further to Belldon of *Life* and *Time*: 'India is being ground down to dust and humiliated even before the Japanese advent—not for India's defence, and no one knows for whose defence. And, therefore, one fine morning I came to the decision to make this honest demand: "For Heaven's sake, leave India alone. Let us breathe the air of freedom. It may choke us, suffocate us, as it did the slaves on their emancipation. But I want the present sham to end."' He went on to add: 'I have not asked the British to hand over India to the Congress or the Hindus. Let them entrust India to God or, in modern parlance, to anarchy. Then, all parties will fight one another like dogs, or will, when real responsibility faces them, come to a reasonable agreement. I shall expect non-violence to arise out of that chaos.'

Thus came Gandhi to sponsor the historic 'Quit India' resolution at the session of the All India Congress Committee on the fateful day of 7 August 1942. Explaining the genesis of his 'honest demand', he said: 'The people make no distinction between British imperialism and the British people. To them the two are one. This hatred would even make them welcome the Japanese. This is most dangerous. It means that they will exchange one slavery for another. We must get rid of this feeling. Our quarrel is not with the British people, we fight their imperialism. The proposal for the withdrawal of British power did not come out of anger. It came to enable India to play its due part at the present critical juncture ... We cannot evoke the true spirit of sacrifice and valour, so long as we do not feel that it is our war, so long as we are not free.'

He had not yet formulated, even in his own mind, any clear plan of action. He hoped to see the Viceroy and make a final appeal to his good sense before doing anything drastic. But the initiative was taken off his hands, when in early hours of 9 August he and other leaders of the Congress were simultaneously arrested and rushed off to different places of confinement under strong guard and behind an iron curtain of secrecy. It was a manoeuvre planned well in advance. The Government had made up its mind to take no chances and to strike with a heavy hand and with lightning speed.

The people, taken unawares and stupefied for the moment, reacted in a frenzy of despair. Disorders broke out almost immediately in various parts of the country. Deprived of

Gandhi's leadership, which both inspired and restrained, the people took the law in their hands and did what they could to paralyse the machinery of administration and communication. The authorities, already war-oriented and well-prepared, answered popular violence with greater violence, until India at last seemed what it, in fact, always was, a land under armed occupation, now no longer disguised.

Gandhi was interned in the Aga Khan Palace in Poona. Sarojini Naidu, Mira Behn and Mahadev Desai were interned with him in the same 'Palace' which was heavily guarded. Three days later Kasturba Gandhi and Sushila Nayar were allowed to join them.

This period of incarceration which was the last of the many he had undergone in his eventful life proved to be the hardest for Gandhi. Not physically, for he could have had any bodily comfort he cared to have in that spacious mansion. Indeed, he would have been less unhappy in an ordinary prison cell. The thought that the Government was spending a large amount in keeping him in that 'Palace' weighed heavily on his mind. For where did the Government of India's wealth ultimately come from, if not from the poor who never had enough for the minimum sustenance?

Besides, he was greatly perturbed by news of the terror reigning in the land and the Government's unfair accusation that he was responsible for the violence of the people. He felt aggrieved that the Viceroy had unjustly denied him the right to see and personally plead with him and had deliberately provoked the people's violence by depriving them of his non-violent guidance.

To this feeling of frustration and helplessness was added the poignancy of a personal tragedy. Six days after his arrest Mahadev Desai, his secretary and devoted companion for twentyfive years whom he loved as his son, died suddenly of heart failure. Over the spot where his body was cremated within the grounds, Gandhi had a mound of stone and mud plaster made and, at his direction, Mira Behn inscribed the letter *Om* on its flat top and below it a cross. Mira Behn has recorded that it was on the cross that Gandhi always placed his flowers. 'As I watched Bapu, I would remember the crucifix in Rome, which had so held him, and it seemed to me that that symbol of supreme sacrifice represented for him the most fundamental urge of his being. It was at this time that Bapu's choice of Christian hymns gradually changed from *Lead Kindly Light* to *When I survey the Wondrous Cross*, which now became the one hymn that he asked for on all special occasions.'

Gandhi began a long and painful correspondence with the Viceroy and his advisers to refute the arbitrary charges and insinuations made against him holding him responsible for the disorders. So malicious, indeed, were the slanders insidiously spread in Britain and the United States that Field Marshal Smuts was constrained to say at a press conference in London: 'It is sheer nonsense to talk of Mahatma Gandhi as a fifth columnist. He is a great man. He is one of the great men of the world.' No doubt, Churchill and the Viceroy Linlithgow also knew this in their heart of hearts, but it suited Churchill's strategy as well as temper, now that the American massive war machine was about to turn the fortunes of the war, to gloat over the discomfiture of the 'half-naked fakir'.

Failing to get a satisfactory response from the Government, Gandhi had resort to the only alternative he could command to being a helpless and docile victim, or witness, of what he deemed a great moral wrong. He decided 'to crucify the flesh by fasting'. He had earlier written to the Viceroy: 'If then I cannot get soothing balm for my pain, I must resort to the law prescribed for the satyagrahis, namely, a fast according to capacity.' He announced a fast for 21 days. Linlithgow was unmoved and seemed unconcerned. While regretting his prisoner's decision, he rubbed in: 'I regard the use of a fast for political purposes as a form of political blackmail for which there is no moral justification.' To this pontifical verdict the Mahatma replied: 'Posterity will judge between you as a representative of an all-powerful government and me a humble man who tried to serve his country and humanity through it.'

The fast began on 10 February 1943. In a few days Gandhi's condition rapidly deteriorated. The public anxiety rose to a feverish pitch and three Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council resigned as a protest against the Government's callous behaviour. But the authorities were adamant. Fortunately Gandhi survived the crisis.

Another personal tragedy lay in wait for him. In December 1943 Kasturba fell ill and in February of the following year she passed away, her head resting in Gandhi's lap. Wrapped in a white sari made of the yarn spun by her husband's hand, as was her last wish, she was cremated at the same spot where Mahadev Desai had been cremated earlier, and a mound next to his was raised over her ashes. Her death ended an intimacy of sixtytwo years, an intimacy that had survived many a crisis of pain and tears and had deepened with the years. Acknowledging the new Viceroy Lord Wavell's letter of condolence, Gandhi wrote: 'Though for her sake I have welcomed her death as bringing freedom from living agony, I feel the loss more than I had thought I should.' They were 'a couple outside the ordinary', he went on to add.

Within a few weeks Gandhi's own health began to cause anxiety. Medical examination revealed malarial parasites in the blood and amoebiasis of the intestines. As his condition grew weaker, public agitation for his release mounted and swept the country from end to end. On 6 May the soldier-Viceroy ordered his unconditional release. Gandhi had grown so weak that for some time after, he was obliged to observe long periods of silence to conserve his energy.

Groping in the Dark

BUT WEAK or strong, he could not sit idle and watch the situation in the country steadily deteriorate. Nor was he pleased that he should have been released for reasons of health. In any case, the release was only a transfer from a prison within a prison to a larger prison which the country had become.

'Illness in a satyagrahi,' he told a gathering of Congressmen in Poona, 'is a thing to be ashamed of... Your faith in me overwhelms me. My accidental release has given rise to great expectations. I am doubtful whether I deserve all this confidence. But this much I know that whatever strength I may have, is entirely due to the fact that I am a votary of truth and non-violence. Some friends have told me that truth and non-violence have no place in politics and worldly affairs. But I do not agree. I have no use for them as a means of individual salvation. Their introduction and application in everyday life has been my experiment all along.'

He asked to see the Viceroy but his overture was rebuffed. He knew that the British Government was encouraging Muslim demands to keep the Hindus and Muslims apart and using this difference as an excuse for its continued occupation of India. All his life he had believed fervently in, and worked for, Hindu-Muslim accord. In 1919 he had gone out of his way to make the Khilafat cause his own and had later fasted to bring about communal harmony. But the more he tried to woo the Muslim leaders and the more he went out of his way to placate them, the more extravagant and intransigent grew their demands.

Was there a hidden flaw in Gandhi's approach to this problem that turned awry every move he made? How is one to explain that while his technique succeeded in winning over the hostile foreigner, in South Africa as in India later, it failed dismally in the case of his own countrymen? Why this undoubtedly authentic apostle of love and non-violence was unable to touch the hearts of the great majority of Indian Muslims is a question worth the attention of historians and social psychologists. The tragic irony of it was that instead of winning their hearts he not only alienated them the more but also many a heart among his own Hindus.

The flaw was, no doubt, in the method rather than in the man. What failed was the strategy. Gandhi the man knew no failure. He achieved magnificently by dying what he failed to achieve while living.

But the failure, dismal and tragic as it turned out to be, was still hidden behind a not too distant bend. Meanwhile, Gandhi, ever an incorrigible optimist, refused to lose faith in the midst of the thickening darkness. Undeterred by the Viceroy's rebuff, he now courted Jinnah's. In September 1944 he had several meetings with 'dear brother Jinnah', held at Gandhi's request and at Jinnah's residence. It suited Jinnah's pride as well as strategy to demonstrate to the world that the Mahatma waited on him and was anxious to appease him.

The basis of their talks was what came to be known as the Rajaji Formula, a formula as ingenious as its author after whom it was named. While seeming to concede the notional claim that the Indian Muslims were a separate nation, it did not concede the right to a wholly separate state of their own. But Jinnah was a past master in the game of stalling and checkmating. So having extracted this notional concession to boost his own claim and prestige, he had no further use for the talks which broke off. He was a more astute tactician than the Mahatma or Rajaji for all their keen intelligence and agility of mind.

The stalemate continued, the darkness grew ominously darker. Frustration was fomenting bitterness. Many among Gandhi's own followers resented his repeatedly inviting the Viceroy's rebuffs; Hindu nationalists resented even more his pampering Jinnah's pride. They felt humiliated. No doubt, being human Gandhi himself could not help being hurt by repeated rebuffs, but he did not feel humiliated. There is no humiliation for a man who seeks no honour outside the innate dignity of his spirit, nor seeks anything for his personal advantage. So far as the Mahatma was concerned, it was the Viceroy who belittled the dignity of his high office by want of grace, and it was Jinnah who demeaned himself by his arrogance and vanity.

How unaffected he was by others' jeers, how not only free from any grudge but ever hopeful of appealing to the best in them is well illustrated in a letter Gandhi addressed to Churchill about this time:

> Dear Prime Minister,
>
> You are reported to have a desire to crush the simple 'Naked Fakir', as you are said to have described me. I have been long trying to be a fakir and that naked—a more difficult task. I, therefore, regard the expression as a compliment, though unintended. I approach you then as such, and ask you to trust and use me for the sake of your people and mine and through them those of the world.
>
> Your sincere friend,
> M. K. Gandhi

A Fighter on Many Fronts

GANDHI WAS a fighter on many fronts. He was at his best on the battle-field, and he had many battle-fields to watch. If the political battle-field was idle, there were other battles to fight. Now that his health was improving, he felt free to give more time and energy to the nation-building activities which were dearer to him than politics — Harijan welfare, reconstruction of village economy, basic education for the masses, propagation of Hindi-Hindustani as the national language, experiments in nature-cure, and the organization of a comprehensive scheme for the welfare and education of women and children, preferably in the rural areas, as part of Kasturba Memorial.

'Freedom is bound to come,' he told a meeting of village workers. 'It is coming. But mere political freedom will not satisfy me... If India is satisfied with the mere attainment of political independence and there is nothing better for me to do, then you will find me retiring to the Himalayas, leaving those who wish to listen to me to seek me out there.'

An empty threat which he was incapable of carrying out. His God was in the dust of the road and not on the immaculate peak of the snowy Himalayas. He had earlier told Maurice Frydman: 'I want to find God. And because I want to find God, I have to find God along with other people. I don't believe I can find God alone. If I did, I would be running to the Himalayas to find God in some cave there, but since I believe that nobody can find God alone, I have to work with people.'

True, he always walked alone — but in the crowd and for the sake of the crowd. One of his favourite songs was the famous one of Tagore's: 'If no one responds to your call, walk alone!'

With the advent of 1945 the War had entered its last phase;

the Allied victory seemed almost certain. The San Francisco Conference was due to meet soon to discuss the future of an unhappy war-torn world. Knowing how easy it was to lose one's head in the first flush of anticipated victory, Gandhi offered a word of advice which the Allies, already intriguing to outwit one another, were in no mood to heed. 'Peace must be just,' said Gandhi. 'In order to be that, peace must neither be punitive nor vindictive. Germany and Japan should not be humiliated. The strong are never vindictive. Therefore, fruits of peace must be equally shared.' He also reminded the Allies that 'Freedom of India will demonstrate to all the exploited races of the earth that their freedom is very near, and that in no case will they thenceforth be exploited.'

And so indeed it turned out to be when freedom did at last come to India. Meanwhile the nation had to pass through the gathering darkness that comes before the dawn. The Allies were on the offensive. The British Government had the upper hand in India. Congress leaders were languishing behind prison bars. Except for the romantic faith of a few rebel leaders who had gone underground the nation seemed dispirited and on the surface quiescent. British authority in India felt reassured. Jinnah could be trusted to spurn any overtures from the Mahatma and to sabotage any direct negotiations of the Congress with the Viceroy, as indeed he did during the Simla talks.

There was nothing that Gandhi could do save keep up the people's morale and hearten their faith and direct their energies along the humble and quiet pathways of constructive activity and self-reliance. In the long run it was these obscure byways reaching to every Indian village which would lead to the people's swaraj and not the big trunk road that led to Delhi. The self-rule of the masses, particularly the dumb and hungry masses helplessly marooned in the villages, was what Gandhi understood by swaraj, and not mere political independence or the substitution, as he put it, of brown for white rule. So he was content to carry on the seemingly humdrum routine of what his 'revolutionary' colleagues and critics impatiently jeered at as an old maid's job. His faith was unshaken. 'I am convinced', he said, 'that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth. I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity...I must not fear if the world is going the wrong way. It may be that India too will go that way and like the proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounden duty up to my last breath to try to protect India and through India the entire world from such a doom.'

Meanwhile beneath the deadly calm on the surface could be heard by a sensitive ear the distant rumbling of an approaching storm. Violence and hatred were simmering everywhere. While Europe had had its blood bath and the people longed for peace, in Asia, the so-called land of peace, it was the other way about. People squirmed with pent-up passion and itched for revenge.

Indian economy, always ill-adjusted and underdeveloped, had been completely disrupted by the ravenous demands of the War. A terrible famine had already ravaged Bengal. Its spectre now haunted the whole country. The unscrupulous had made enormous profits during the war, the poor had grown poorer. The Government's desperate anxiety, during the difficult years of the War, to secure the support at any price of the vested interests had made it callous to the well-being of the people, not knowing how long its own regime would endure. After me the deluge! The authorities had blinked their eyes and connived at business practices which in Great Britain would have been punished as ruthlessly as treason against the state. The atmosphere reeked with corruption and cynicism.

Gandhi sensed it. He could hear the rumbling, too. He was agonized and helpless. But agony did not damp his spirits, nor did helplessness paralyse his initiative. He was on the move, wandering over eastern and southern India, rousing the people's will to mould their own destiny. Your future is in your hands, and not in the hands of the British, he said again and again. You are free the moment you cease to depend on others. This freedom, which is the only real freedom, none can take away from you.

During his tour of Bengal he visited Santiniketan which was for him hallowed with the memories of Rabindranath Tagore — the two friends more often than not agreed to differ and yet loved and honoured each other — and of his dear Charles Freer Andrews whom he had named 'Deenbandhu', friend of the poor. Both of them had passed away four years earlier. Tagore he lovingly apostrophied as 'Light that never failed', and in memory of the assurance he had given him, he took keen interest in the activities of the various educational and other institutions founded by the poet. In Santiniketan he laid the foundation of the proposed Deenbandhu Memorial Hospital, to the accompaniment, appropriately, of the Tagore song: 'Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet, where live the poorest, the lowliest, and lost.'

A Dawn Red with Blood

ODDLY ENOUGH, along with Gandhi the British people also sensed the ominous menace that hung over India. Perhaps not so oddly. For the British have had a long tradition of manifold sensibility, or else they could not have played the role in world history that they have in fact played. The people of Britain, having emerged battered but victorious from a great ordeal, understood with an intuitive wisdom, rare in a whole people, that they must sooner or later, and sooner the better, divest themselves of the responsibility of ruling India.

India was no longer an asset but a burden; it had ceased to be the hunting ground of imperial trophies and was increasingly becoming a breeding ground of imperial hazards. The brightest jewel in the British crown was turning into a rankling thorn. And so, despite the people's grateful appreciation of Churchill's leonine leadership in the War, the British electorate rejected his sterile leadership in peace and instead gave the mandate to the Labour Party. One of the first announcements of the new Prime Minister Clement Attlee was the promise of 'an early realization of self-government in India'.

A high-powered mission of three Cabinet Ministers arrived in March 1946 to discuss with Indian leaders and the Viceroy the terms and conditions of an orderly and smooth transfer of power to Indian hands and arrangements for the framing of India's future constitution by Indians themselves. So dramatic was the turn of events that the Indians, leaders no less than people, almost reeled with surprise. They were incredulous at first. It seemed too good to be true that the British Government really meant to part with power in India.

Most Indians were still suspicious of British intentions and thought that the astute rulers had something sinister up their sleeve. Even Gandhi who had peremptorily asked the British to quit more than three years earlier was taken unawares and not a little shaken by the impact. As he confessed to a British friend: 'This time, I believe the British mean business. But the offer has come suddenly. Will India be jerked into independence? I feel today like a passenger who has been hoisted in a basket chair on a ship's deck in a stormy sea and has not found his feet.'

At the request of the Cabinet Mission, Gandhi who was directing operations at a nature-cure centre he had recently started in a village near Poona—among his fads naturopathy was at once the earliest and the latest—came over to Delhi to be available for consultation and advice. He stayed in a cottage in the Bhangi (untouchable sweepers) Colony which became a centre of pilgrimage and rendezvous of both high and low.

Unfortunately, however, with the best will in the world and with all the political acumen and diplomatic skill which the three seasoned British Cabinet Ministers—Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence and Alexander—could command, they failed to bring the Congress and Jinnah together. The President of the Congress happened to be Maulana Azad, an eminent Muslim scholar and patriot, and, if Islam be the test, a far more authentic Muslim than Jinnah, who could hardly read the Quran. But the very irony of this contrast made Jinnah more obdurate and difficult. He insisted that no Muslim who believed in India as one nation could be anything but a stooge of the caste Hindus.

In this ugly impasse Gandhi was obliged to advise the Mission to formulate a plan on their own which might form a basis of discussion between the differing parties. It was a humiliating thing for him to suggest, for he had always maintained that but for the British there would be no conflict of interests between Muslims, Hindus and other Indian communities.

On 16 May the Cabinet Mission announced its plan which was as reasonable a compromise as could be devised under the circumstances—a compromise between, on the one hand, the 'almost universal desire, outside the supporters of the Moslem League, for the unity of India' and, on the other, 'the very genuine and acute anxiety of the Moslems lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Hindu-majority rule'. Pending the framing of a constitution by a national Constituent Assembly whose members would be elected by newly elected provincial legislatures, the Viceroy would proceed with the formation of an interim national government.

Like all compromise plans, its feasibility depended on the goodwill of the two major parties in the country. While Gandhi declared that after a searching examination of its clauses for four days, he had arrived at the conviction 'that it is the best document the British Government could have produced in the circumstances', Jinnah criticized the plan for its 'common-place and exploded arguments' and insisted that Pakistan was the only solution.

Later, however, both Muslim League and Congress accepted the plan, though neither party seemed wholly satisfied with it. But they failed to agree on the formation of a provisional national government. Wearied of Jinnah's obduracy, the Viceroy invited Jawaharlal Nehru on 12 August to form the government. Frustrated and fuming, Jinnah declared 16 August as 'Direct Action Day'.

Thus arose over the eastern sky the blood-drenched dawn of Indian independence. Bengal was under a Muslim League Ministry, so that the League's call for Direct Action amounted to an open instigation of Muslim miscreants to do their worst in the name of religion and under as good as official auspices. Arms had been distributed and all arrangements made well in advance. Only a call was needed to start an orgy of murder, loot and arson and rape of Hindu women. Which is what actually happened. Hell was let loose in the city of Calcutta and so gruesome were the deeds done and so savage the horrors perpetrated on innocent women and children that the *Statesman*, then British-owned and far from pro-Congress, was constrained to write editorially: 'This is not a riot. It needs a word found in medieval history, a fury.' Writing in the same journal, Kim Christen confessed: 'I have a stomach made strong by the experience of a war hospital, but war was never like this.'

Recovering from the initial shock, and maddened by the outrage on their women and children, the Hindus of Calcutta retaliated with a vehemence which set the city reeling from end to end under the blast of a two-edged fury. Unable to cope with the Hindu onslaught in Calcutta, despite the Government's official patronage, the Muslim League let loose, by way of retaliation, a hurricane of carnage, rape and arson in the district of Noakhali in east Bengal where the Muslims were in an overwhelming majority. And so began a chain reaction of violence and horror which set the country ablaze from east to west. What India was spared during the War she now had with a vengeance and in a manifestation vastly more ugly—carnage without courage, hatred without heroism, savagery without sacrifice. The pride of non-violence was humbled in shame, the voice of sanity drowned in a howl of hatred, and the sweet fruit of freedom turned sour and snapped into halves before it could ripen. This great sin of Indian history, who will expiate?

Meanwhile, the Viceroy had coaxed Jinnah to let the Muslim League join the interim national government. But the Muslim League came in only to wreck the Government from within so as to demonstrate that there could be no 'national' government of 'two nations'.

The Lone Expiator

GANDHI WAS in his Ashram at Sevagram when the news of the Great Calcutta Killing reached him. His reaction was characteristic of the Mahatma. Too heroic for the flesh, it made inevitable the process of alienating his co-religionists which ended in the tragic climax of his martyrdom. 'If through deliberate courage,' he said, 'the Hindus had died to a man, that would have been deliverance of Hinduism and India and purification for Islam in this land.' In other words, he called upon Hindus to expiate the sins of Muslims. He did not call upon Muslims to expiate their own sins, let alone the sins of Hindus.

The Muslims openly jeered at him. The majority of Hindus at least listened to him with respect, even if they sulked and fumed in private. They could hardly be expected to welcome the privilege of offering themselves *en masse* for immolation. Gandhi was realist enough to understand this. And yet the sin must be expiated. Who will do it? In the end the Mahatma had to expiate the sins of both Hindus and Muslims.

He was in Delhi when the news of the Noakhali carnage, censored and suppressed for a week by the Bengal Government, at last broke through. More than the slaughter of life, it was the raping and abduction of women which lacerated Gandhi's heart. He made up his mind to proceed to Bengal. 'I do not know what I shall be able to do there,' he confessed. 'All that I know is that I won't be at peace unless I go.'

On his way to Noakhali he spent some time in Calcutta to take stock of the situation and to win the goodwill of the Muslim League Premier Suhrawardy. Gandhi made it clear that he had come to Bengal, not to collect evidence against the Muslim League Ministry or to sit in judgement on any community, but to instil courage in the hearts of the Hindus and to teach tolerance to both the communities, so that they may continue to live together as friendly neighbours as they had done for centuries.

The streets of Calcutta were still littered with the stinking debris of the recent holocaust. It gave him 'a sinking feeling at the mass madness that can turn man into less than a brute'. Ever an incorrigible optimist, he hoped against hope to quench the raging fires of political passion and religious hatred with the tears of compassion.

He thought that if he could walk into this jungle of menace fearlessly and without protection and with compassion in his heart, he would, by living with, and placing himself at the mercy of, Muslims, convince them that he was as much their friend and well-wisher as of the rest of India. The frightened, demoralized Hindus, seeing him in their midst, would take heart and return to their deserted homes.

A desperate and heroic bid to calm with words of courage, wisdom and compassion the rising tempest of folly, fear and hatred. The age-old Hindu faith in the power of the sacrificial *mantra*. Brave and beautiful—if only the old gods were there to enforce its potency!

Even before Gandhi could leave Calcutta for Noakhali came the ghastly news from Bihar that infuriate Hindu mobs had outdone the performance in savagery of their Muslim counterparts of Calcutta and Noakhali. Gandhi was shocked beyond measure and his heart was wrung with pain and shame, for he loved Bihar, the scene of his first successful satyagraha in India. Immediately he announced that as penance he would keep himself 'on the lowest diet possible' and that this semi-fast would become 'a fast unto death if the erring Biharis have not turned over a new leaf.'

It is a fact not without a certain significance that Gandhi's fasts—and they were many in his long public career—were undertaken either against his own people (inmates of his ashram or Hindus in general) or against the British Government. None was ever undertaken against the Muslims who were the biggest source of his frustration and who benefited most from his suffering and sacrifice.

And so on a half-fast and with anguish in his heart, Gandhi left for Noakhali. Not alone and unaided as he would have wished to. He had to travel by a special train, accompanied by, apart from his personal retinue, a Minister and two Parliamentary Secretaries of the Bengal Government. It was impossible for him to 'walk alone' except morally and symbolically. Everywhere the crowds that collected on the way, for his *darshan* or out of curiosity, were so vast and unmanageable that but for special protection he would have been crushed to death out of sheer reverence.

East Bengal where Noakhali is, being criss-crossed with rivers and canals, the journey had to be performed by train, car and motor or country boat. Passing through many villages on the way, Gandhi saw with his own eyes the charred remains of what once were living homes and human beings and the living ruins of what once were proud, happy women. Members of his personal retinue, his close associates and disciples, were dispersed by him in different villages, each to live alone and unaided, the better to instil courage in the hearts of the surviving Hindus and shame into the minds of the swarming Muslims.

In one village which he passed, almost all the Hindu houses had been burnt down and most male members butchered. As Gandhi walked past this gruesome scene a Tibetan spaniel, which had been seen wandering round the place for some days like a ghost, came up to Gandhi whimpering and trying to lead him somewhere. Gandhi followed till he came to a spot where lay three human skeletons and a number of skulls and bones, ghastly relics of the grim tragedy that had befallen the dog's master and his family. Gandhi's heart was wrung with pain and shame wherever he was accosted by groups of wailing women who had seen their husbands, brothers and sons slaughtered and their daughters dishonoured. What consolation could he offer them? He was truthful enough to say that he had come to give them, not consolation but courage.

He himself made his headquarters in the village of Srirampur, where only three Hindu families had remained out of the original two hundred. He kept with himself Nirmal Kumar Bose, his Bengali secretary and interpreter, and Parsuram, his stenographer. Later, Manu joined him, a grand-niece whom he lovingly called his grand-daughter.

He stayed there for about six weeks, cutting his ration of food and sleep to the barest minimum, visiting during the day neighbouring homes and villages, comforting the afflicted with his words of courage and faith, and coaxing the truculent Muslims into a sense of shame. The only revenge worthy of human beings, he said, is to return good for evil. Part of the night had to be given to work, for the correspondence was voluminous and, despite the inaccessible nature of the location, the flow of visitors from far and near unceasing.

The political atmosphere in Delhi bristled with misunderstanding and suspicion, and Gandhi's advice was being constantly sought. In the last week of December Jawaharlal Nehru arrived for personal consultation, accompanied by Acharya Kripalani, then Congress President. It was not only the big triangle of Congress, Muslim League and the British Government that had turned into a hot bed of thorns, but within the Congress High Command itself there was rivalry, backbiting and misunderstanding. Even the little coterie of 'disciplined' and 'dedicated' workers that formed Gandhi's personal entourage and were now dispersed in the neighbouring villages were not free from these human failings. The Mahatma had to bear the brunt of it all.

He was restless and anguished. He had always striven for equanimity of mind as preached by the Gita and had declared: 'Because I know that joy and grief are the obverse and reverse of the same coin, I remain unaffected by either and act as God bids me.' A brave faith, but it did not always work, as those who stayed with him and served him intimately have testified.

Indeed, some of the cryptic entries in the diary kept by Gandhi himself amply bear it out. 'Everything seems to be going awry. There is falsehood all around,' he scribbled on 26 December 1946. The entry dated 2 January 1947 is even more eloquent: 'Have been awake since 2 a.m. God's grace alone is sustaining me. I can see there is some grave defect in me somewhere which is the cause of all this. All around me is utter darkness. When will God take me out of this darkness into His Light?'

The same morning the Srirampur camp was wound up and Gandhi started on his trek on foot from village to village. By way of added penance he had now discarded the pair of sandals he wore. He must walk barefoot—not only symbolically but literally. 'The lone pilgrim', 'the bare-footed pilgrim', is how his biographers have described him on this march. Although pilgrimage is to a holy place and not to an unholy slaughter-house, Gandhi himself described his venture as a pilgrimage in one of his post-prayer speeches. The merit of pilgrimage, he said, lay in self-purification, and every step he took was towards that end. Sarojini Naidu, the poetess, wrote to him from Santiniketan where she happened to be on a visit: 'Beloved Pilgrim, setting out on your pilgrimage of love and hope, "Go with God" in the beautiful Spanish phrase.'

Appropriately, he began the march, early in the morning with the singing of his favourite Tagore song: 'If no one responds to your call, walk alone... If no one talks for fear, speak out alone... If all turn away, walk alone... Over the thorns and along the blood-strewn track, walk alone...'

Walk Alone

THERE WERE no roads in that water-logged delta, not even well-worn paths. Slippery bamboo poles tied together made the bridges which had to be traversed cautiously and with care. Sometimes the track was so narrow that walking was possible in single file only.

Muslim miscreants, thwarted in their designs of more loot, rape and arson by Gandhi's presence in the locality, not only boycotted his meetings but did what they could to make his march as onerous and unpleasant as they could. Excreta would be dumped on the narrow path which Gandhi was to tread, and he would patiently remove the filth himself, using dry leaves as an improvised broom. The village crowd would stand around unconcerned and watch the 'fun'.

A pilgrimage, indeed, it was, to put the pilgrim's endurance, patience and devotion to the severest test.

In the noble book of Gandhi's life this chapter is perhaps the noblest. Just when the longed-for political freedom was round the corner and the State apparatus of power was his for the taking, he turned his back on it and set out to face the hazards of a desperate mission in what was soon to become foreign territory and was already an 'enemy camp', to plant the banner of courage and compassion in a wilderness of terror and hate. At the age of 77, in failing health and on insufficient nourishment, he trudged barefoot from village to village, through a difficult and unfamiliar countryside, over precarious bamboo bridges, his every movement watched by hostile menacing eyes.

Day after day, in a hundred different ways he harped on one refrain only: In the name of God, who is Allah to Muslims and Isvara to Hindus, be as brothers unto one another as He wants you to be. Die, if you must, but do not kill. Death is better than dishonour.

But this noblest chapter of his life was also the most heartbreaking. His bravest venture proved the least successful of his many campaigns. True, he rose on the ladder of his own heroic sacrifice to an immeasurable height, but he failed to redeem those whom he hoped to save.

The Muslims, despite a qualm of conscience here and there, were unrepentant. Indeed, they became increasingly more impatient and insolent, and kept on asking him to leave their land and go to Bihar where he was more wanted.

The Hindus gained a respite from terror, but no more than a respite. They would always be vulnerable and at the mercy of the majority, so long as they chose to remain where they were, as Gandhi wanted them to remain. Those who were already brave gained, no doubt, an access of courage, but there were not many such, unfortunately.

Nirmal Kumar Bose who was Gandhi's companion on this march has cited one such admirable type encountered in the village of Jagatpur where Gandhi addressed a women's meeting on 10 January. After the meeting Gandhi asked Bose to record the statements of women who had been abducted and dishonoured. It was not easy to make the frightened victims speak out without reserve. But there was one brave girl who did so and related everything. On the following morning Bose went to see the girl's mother. Their own home having been burnt down, the mother and daughter had been given shelter by a friendly neighbour, a brave young man who loved the girl and was willing to marry her.

'With the mother's permission,' recalls Bose, 'I then took the girl to the deserted home. On reaching the site, we saw nothing but denuded plinths and a few pieces of charred wood strewn here and there. The iron sheets had all been carried away by Muslim villagers. The place where two of her brothers had been thrown into the fire after murder lay beside the walk in the garden, and there I picked up charred bits of bone from among the charcoal. The girl described to me how the rioters came, what they did and so on; and then I put her the following question: Would she be able to come back here and live once more in the midst of scenes she could never forget? The girl remained silent for a little while, and then with her eyes fixed in gaze on the distant fields, she calmly said, "Yes, I can. What can they do to me now? They have done all that was in their power to do, and if they come again, perhaps I shall know how to save myself by dying."'

On 2 March 1947, after two months of trudging barefoot from village to village, day after day, Gandhi left for Bihar from where the agonized cry of the Muslim victims of Hindu vengeance had pierced his heart. Although his earlier threat to go on a fast unto death if the carnage were not halted, and the visit of Nehru to the province and the stern measures taken to bring the chaos under control, had had the desired result, the havoc wrought had been widespread and immense, and the major problems of rehabilitating the victims and of restoring confidence remained to be adequately tackled.

In Noakhali the ground was treacherous and Gandhi had to pick his way warily. The Muslims were suspicious and truculent, and he did not wish to provoke them further by finding fault with them. He was at pains to explain that he had not come to sit in judgement on them. The Hindus were cowed down and many of them were afraid even to speak out loudly. Beyond asking them to be brave, to trust in God and to forgive the wrongs suffered, he could do little more for them.

In Bihar the roles had been reversed and the tables turned on the Muslims. Here Gandhi was neither reserved nor restrained in his pity for the Muslims and his wrath against the majority community and the Congress Ministers. He felt himself on surer ground. He could not only chide his own people but call on them to make ample amends for the wrong done. Unlike Noakhali, he was besieged by worshipping crowds who poured money in his lap for the relief of the homeless. Many women voluntarily parted with their jewellery to help their Muslim 'sisters'. But the Muslims, instead of being touched and shamed by the contrast, became more petulant and insistent in their demands and almost strained Gandhi's patience. 'Do the Muslims want,' he once burst out, 'that I should not speak about the sins committed by them in Noakhali and that I should only speak about the sins of the Hindus in Bihar? If I do that, I will be a coward. To me, the sins of the Muslims and the Bihar Hindus are of the same magnitude and are equally condemnable.'

Harrowing tales were pouring in of the miserable plight of the Hindus in Rawalpindi and the Punjab, and but for the Mahatma's presence the Biharis might have lost their heads again in an orgy of retaliation. 'If ever you become mad again,' he said to them, 'you must destroy me first.'

Which is, indeed, what tragically came to pass in the end, though it was not a Bihari hand that pulled the trigger. But already the signs were ominous. The Gandhian way, infallible earlier, had somehow, somewhere, gone awry. It was alienating the Hindus, without winning over the Muslims.

It was sad to see Gandhi go out of his way to please the Muslims and achieve a contrary result. As always, the pampered became more greedy and more aggressive. The more he appealed to their good sense, the more they blackmailed his conscience. This, in turn, made the Hindus more embittered, both against Gandhi and against the Muslims. It was a vicious circle.

The brave honour the brave. Gandhi defied and fought the British, he was fair and straight with them, and they honoured him for it, even when they had to lock him up behind the bars. General Smuts was his classic antagonist and admirer. The antagonism was open and the admiration mutual. As the General's prisoner in the Johannesburg jail, Gandhi had made with his own hands a pair of sandals which he sent as a gift to him before sailing from South Africa in 1914. Recalling the gesture twenty-five years later, General Smuts wrote: 'I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then, even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man.'

Price of Freedom

MEANWHILE THE ground was slipping under the feet of the composite, provisional, the so-called national government at Delhi. The Muslim League repudiated its earlier acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan and declined to participate in the Constituent Assembly. To avert a final break the Attlee Government made a last effort by inviting the Congress and League leaders to London for a conference. But nothing came of it. The brave soldier-Viceroy Wavell, who had earlier gracefully acknowledged Rommel's superior strategy in desert warfare, had now to confess himself baffled on the civil battle-field. Across the political chess-board he was no match for the elusive and obstinate Mr Jinnah.

Mindful of the Viceroy's discomfiture and anxious to halt the drift to chaos, the British Cabinet made up its mind boldly to announce a firm policy and to appoint a new Viceroy to give effect to it. By a lucky stroke of judgement the Cabinet's choice fell upon Lord Mountbatten. It is doubtful if a better choice could have been made. The hour had found the man. The bold policy he was commissioned to carry out was nothing less than the liquidation of the British Empire in India by June 1948, in 'ways as may seem most reasonable and in the best interest of the Indian people'.

Gandhi was in Bihar when Mountbatten arrived in Delhi. One of the first acts of the new Viceroy was to invite Gandhi to Delhi for personal consultation. Gandhi dutifully came and when asked for his advice gave it. Himself the butt of many rebuffs, he never failed to respond to a call by whomsoever made, be he the lowest in the land or the highest. But the advice he gave to Mountbatten was too bold even for the intrepid sailor-Viceroy who was to play his most daring strategy in India. Gandhi's advice was that the Viceroy should dismiss the Nehru Government and invite Jinnah to form a Government of his choice at the centre. The Congress, assured Gandhi, would do nothing to queer the pitch of Jinnah's Government. But if Jinnah did not accept the offer, the same offer should be made to the Congress.

The Viceroy was taken aback. His advisers smelt a rat. There was, they suspected, a catch somewhere, and the Viceroy was advised to keep away from the Mahatma's trap. It is difficult to say what might have happened had the Viceroy boldly acted on this advice. It was Gandhi's last bid to stem the rising flood of communal violence that was sweeping over the land and to salvage the unity of India. Perhaps it was already too late to avert the impending doom.

In any case Mountbatten had to come to his own conclusion after discussions with the various parties and interests concerned. He was intelligent, suave and charming and easily succeeded in convincing the Indian leaders of his goodwill and earnestness. Having been an experienced commander on the perilous seas, he knew the value of a quick decision. He soon arrived at the painful conclusion that the conflicting aspirations of the League and the Congress could not be reconciled except at the cost of partitioning the country. The sooner it was done and the British quitted India, the better for all the parties concerned. Indeed, the situation seemed so critical that Lord Ismay, his Chief of Staff, likened it to 'taking charge of a ship in mid-ocean with a fire on the deck and ammunition in the hold'.

It did not take the Viceroy long to convince the Congress leaders of the seemingly inescapable logic of the events. Their frustrating experience of Muslim League partnership in the provisional 'national' cabinet had already done the trick. Mountbatten's bigger triumph was to have convinced Jinnah that there had to be a Partition within Partition, that by the same inexorable necessity by which India had to be cut into two, Bengal and the Punjab had the right to decide on their own partition prior to option for India or Pakistan. Jinnah, deeply mortified at the intervention of this nemesis and unable to resist its logic, had to reconcile himself to a 'moth-eaten Pakistan'.

Thus in the final stage of the march to freedom, the chariot of Indian history moved at breathless speed, raising blinding clouds of blood-stained dust and trampling over and scattering pell-mell millions of innocent victims. No Car of Juggernaut ever crushed or disrupted more lives under its remorseless wheels. 'Within seventy-three days of our arrival,' recalled the Viceroy's Press Attaché, Alan Campbell-Johnson, 'the Partition Plan had been announced; a further seventy-two days after that, and the Viceroyalty itself was at an end.'

The end of British rule over India, of which Viceroyalty was the exalted symbol, was a consummation most ardently longed for by Gandhi. More than any one else he had undermined the foundation of this rule. But now that the end was in sight, he was far from happy. He fought hard to persuade the Congress leaders not to be hustled into accepting Partition out of panic. But the Congress leaders having chosen to ride the tiger were unable to get off its back. Half elated and half scared, partly lured and partly in panic, they were unnerved and confused and did not know what to do. Perhaps they really believed that by conceding Jinnah's claim to Pakistan they would have solved once for all the communal problem. And yet Jawaharlal Nehru, in one of his moods of intellectual detachment which distinguished him from the common run of politicians, is supposed to have remarked privately that 'by cutting off the head we will get rid of the headache'.

Gandhi reiterated that if Partition must come, it should come after, and not before, Freedom. Let the British withdraw and leave India to her fate; there might be chaos or anarchy for a time and India may have to go through the fire, 'but that fire would purify us'. But Gandhi's was now a voice in the wilderness. The initiative had ceased to be his.

In less than three decades since he took over command of the political struggle, he had brought the nation to the very gates of freedom. Seeing the gates about to open, there was a maddened rush to leap over the last hurdle. The unseemly scramble for prizes had begun. Sadly the wizard stepped aside, broke his magic wand and watched sorrowfully the desperate stampede, hordes rushing in, hordes fleeing out, some in glee, some in panic. How many would be trampled under? Would he himself be spared? He had no wish to be.

On the morning of 1 June, two days before the formal announcement of the final Plan under which British sovereignty would be split between the two successor States of India and Pakistan, Gandhi — as his personal attendants and biographers have recorded — woke up earlier than usual, and since there was still some time for the prayer to begin, he lay in bed and was heard musing audibly: 'Today I find myself all alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading is wrong and peace is sure to return if the Partition is agreed upon. They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be a partition, it should not be through the British intervention or under the British rule. They wonder if I have not deteriorated with age. Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel if I am to prove a true and loyal friend to the Congress and the British people, as I claim to be. I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark.'

After a while he continued: 'But maybe, all of them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness. I shall perhaps not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through, thinking of it. Let it not be said that Gandhi was party to India's vivisection. But everybody is today impatient for India's independence. Therefore, there is no help.'

On the following day which was a Monday, Mountbatten, as his Press Attaché has reported, awaited Gandhi 'with considerable trepidation', not knowing what the unpredictable Mahatma might have up his sleeve. Gandhi had made no secret of his opposition to vivisect India, but to what length he was prepared to go to wreck the Plan was the question. And so when he calmly scribbled on the backs of various used envelopes and other scraps of paper (as was his wont as an exercise and example in economy) that he was observing his weekly day of silence, the Viceroy could hardly conceal his relief—and amazement. On one of the scraps Gandhi had written: 'Have I said one word against you during my speeches?'

'When the interview was over,' wrote Campbell-Johnson in his diary, 'Mountbatten picked up the various bits of paper, which he thinks will be among his more historic relics.' The Viceroy had guessed that 'behind this quaint procedure lay a great act of political renunciation, of self-effacement and of self-control.'

So indeed it was. Not only was the idea of vivisecting India repugnant to Gandhi's passionate faith in his country's unity, but, as he put it, he could clearly see rivers of blood flowing in the aftermath of Partition. 'Why then don't you fight it as you have fought before many a lesser evil?' asked a visitor. 'Wouldn't I do it, if only I had the time?' replied Gandhi in a voice sad and vibrant with suppressed passion. 'But I cannot challenge the present Congress leadership and demolish the people's faith in it unless I am in a position to tell them, Here's an alternative leadership! I haven't the time left to build up such an alternative. It would be wrong under the circumstances to weaken the present leadership. I must therefore swallow the bitter pill.'

And bitter it was! So bitter that the chief architect of India's freedom whose finest hour it should have been to watch its inauguration, refused to be in Delhi when the day arrived. He preferred to be in Calcutta where the unhappy city, lacerated and bleeding, almost without respite since the Great Calcutta Killing a year earlier, needed his healing presence.

Thrice he was approached by emissaries of the Government of India for a message to be broadcast on the Day of Independence. They tried to impress on him that 'it would not be good' if there was no message from him. 'There is no message at all,' was the Mahatma's brusque reply. 'If it is bad, let it be so.' A similar request from the B.B.C. was likewise turned down. 'They must forget that I know English,' was his reply. What anguish must have prompted such curt replies on such an occasion from one who was normally so gracious and bubbling over with kindly humour!

Perhaps the people who had most reason for legitimate pride and joy on the day of India's and Pakistan's independence were the British. Walter Lippmann had this in mind when he wrote in *Washington Post:* 'Perhaps Britain's finest hour is not in the past.' Describing the Indian Independence Bill as 'a Treaty of Peace without a War', Lord Samuel said in the House of Lords: 'It. may be said of the British Raj, as Shakespeare said of the Thane of Cawdor, "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it".'

One-Man Boundary Force

GANDHI HAD originally planned to proceed to Noakhali which, after Partition, would be part of Pakistan. But he could not leave Calcutta without pouring, as he put it, 'a pot of water over the raging fire that was burning'. The tables had now been turned. The Hindus, elated at being at last masters in their own home, were on the war path. The Muslims were in panic, though still sullenly aggressive and hitting back wherever they were clustered together in sufficient strength. But they knew well enough that their days were numbered and nothing but a miracle could save them from being annihilated or hounded out of Calcutta and West Bengal.

The erstwhile Premier, Suhrawardy, was crest-fallen and considerably chastened. Not only had his writ ceased to run in Calcutta but he had been thrown out of Muslim League leadership in East Bengal. He begged Gandhi to prolong his stay until the premier city of India had recovered its sanity. To Gandhi no invitation was more welcome than to be where he could face the greatest challenge. But he made it a condition of his agreement that Suhrawardy should share the mission with him and live with him under the same roof. 'I do not want you to come to a decision immediately,' he told him. 'You should go back home and consult your daughter; for the implication of what I mean is that the old Suhrawardy will have to die and accept the garb of a mendicant (fakir).'

The house which Gandhi selected for the purpose belonged to an old Muslim lady and lay in a quarter which, in the words of Sardar Patel, was 'a veritable shambles and a notorious den of gangsters and hooligans'. It was a place vulnerable to attack, where he would be entirely at the mercy of truculent Hindu youths who were angry with him for coming into their midst to protect the Muslims, having failed to come to the rescue of the Hindus when they were mercilessly butchered a year earlier. Gandhi knew all this and yet refused to have any armed guard for protection. Let this be the true test of non-violence, he said, to meet danger with no protection or weapon save love in the heart and sanity in the head!

On the afternoon of 13 August he moved into this house at Beliaghata. He was met at the gate by a band of hostile young men with slogans of 'Gandhi, go back!' Suhrawardy's car was surrounded and when he was finally allowed to enter the house, stones rained in through the glass windows. Gandhi sent for the demonstrators and calmly explained to them the purpose of his mission and his determination 'to do or die' at his post. His words had a calming effect and after one more session with the still half-angry young men the following day, the tempest of hatred subsided.

Instead of subsiding with a sullen, churlish growl, leaving the earth dry and dusty, the tempest brought in its wake, mercifully, a most unexpected shower of grace. Suddenly and without any ostensible direction or prompting, crowds of Hindus and Muslims gathered in the streets to celebrate jointly the eve of Independence, dancing and hugging one another. The Bengali poet, Sudhindranath Datta, who was witness to this scene of sudden transformation from a frenzy of hatred into an explosion of affection described it as 'perhaps the only miracle I have in my life seen'.

But Gandhi was not unduly elated. He had his doubts if the transformation was real enough to last long. On the following day which opened with a fanfare of pomp and rejoicing to welcome the advent of Independence after centuries of subjection, Gandhi observed fast for the day, whether as mourning for Partition, or as thanksgiving for the British exit, or for the return of sanity to Calcutta, or because it was the anniversary of the death of his beloved companion Mahadev Desai five years ago, or for all these reasons together, he alone knew.

To Agatha Harrison he wrote (on the same day) to say that his way of celebrating great events was to thank God for it and therefore to fast and pray. His advice to the newly sworn-in members of the West Bengal Cabinet who came to seek his blessing was characteristic: 'From today you have to wear the crown of thorns . . . Beware of power; power corrupts. Do not let yourselves be entrapped by its pomp and pageantry. Remember, you are in office to serve the poor in India's villages. May God help you.'

'The joy of the crowd is there,' he wrote to Mira Behn, 'but not in me is any satisfaction. Anything lacking in me? . . . Hindu Muslim unity seems to be too sudden to be true. They ascribe the transformation to me. I wonder! Probably things would have been like this even if I had not been on the scene. Time will show.'

What Gandhi had feared came to pass. The so-called 'miracle' was short-lived. His earlier foreboding of 'rivers of blood' flowing in the aftermath of Partition was only too tragically borne out by the holocaust that had swept over almost the whole of West Pakistan. No epidemic spreads more wildly than mass insanity. The convalescent Calcutta succumbed to its first wave. Until 31 August the atmosphere was so deceptively calm and cordial that Gandhi announced that on the following day he would proceed to Noakhali where his mission had remained uncompleted. Fortunately, he allowed Suhrawardy to return to his own house to make arrangements for the journey the next day.

The trouble began suddenly at 10 p.m. after Gandhi had retired for the night. A large crowd of excited young men forced their way into the house and began smashing whatever they could lay their hands on. Gandhi, who had risen to face the yelling crowd and stood calmly with his hands folded, narrowly missed a flying brick and the blow of a stick aimed at him. The rowdies were really after Suhrawardy's blood, but luckily the bird had flown.

After the crowd was persuaded to withdraw, news was received that hand grenades were thrown at a passing truckload of Muslims, killing two of them instantly. Nirmal Kumar Bose who was staying with Gandhi at the time and assisting him as secretary relates a certain significant episode which throws light on the very subtle but important distinction between Gandhi's elastic interpretation of non-violence and the rigid attitude of Western Pacifists or the no-injury-to-living creed of Jainism to which he partly owed his own faith. A group of young men who felt that having given their word to the Mahatma a few days earlier, they were honour-bound to protect the Muslims, came to inquire if they could use sten guns for the purpose. Gandhi told them that 'he was with them'. If the Congress Chief Minister failed to protect the minority, and the young men were able to do so with the help of firearms, 'they deserved his support'.

But having said so, Gandhi, however, met the crisis in his own way. It was not his way to depend on an outside agency, Government or private, when an issue of such moral magnitude was at stake. So he announced that he would go on a fast which would end only 'when the conflagration ends'.

As usual the Mahatma's fast had the desired dramatic effect. Within three days of its commencement he received written assurances from leaders of all sections of the people that they would willingly lay down their lives before they allowed a recurrence of the communal madness in the city. Whether this assurance was the result of a genuine conversion of the heart or was a concession forced by a subtle form of love's blackmail, or was a confused blend of the two, who can say?

Meanwhile, the conflagration in the Punjab, North-west Frontier and Sind continued to rage fiercely, and nearly ten million people were on the move, forsaking their native homes to seek shelter across the burning border. It was a stampede of colossal proportions brought on by a hysteria of the herd, unprecedented in history. 'I flew over columns of refugees,' recorded Campbell-Johnson in his diary, 'stretching for more than sixty miles, creeping along narrow roads, the families carrying all their worldly goods in bullock-carts. There had been many communal migrations before, but never of this magnitude. Moreover, this time there would be no return.'

This despite the elaborate security measures the Viceroy had taken to prevent such a catastrophe in the Punjab. As Mountbatten later described it, 'while the 55-thousand-man Boundary Force in the Punjab was swamped by riots, the One-Man Boundary Force brought peace to Bengal.'

It is a well-attested fact of contemporary history that the so-called disorderly and hysteric Calcutta was the only authentic scene of the Gandhian miracle of love's triumph. The much-maligned Bengalis were the only Indians to respond *en masse* spontaneously and overflowingly to the Mahatma's cry of anguish. The most suffering people in India proved to be the most generous, and the most excitable the most sober. The great predecessors of Gandhi who made modern Bengal had not lived in vain.

Do or Die

GANDHI WAS anxious to proceed to the Punjab, hoping to pour there too 'a pot of water' over the raging flames of communal hatred. But when he arrived in Delhi on 9 September he found that the epicentre of the mad earthquake that had rocked the Punjab had shifted to Delhi. An insane orgy of lawless violence held the city in a vicious grip. And since Gandhi must be where the danger was greatest, he decided to 'do or die' in Delhi.

This time he could not stay in his favourite hut in the Sweepers' Colony which had been overrun and occupied by refugees from the Punjab. He was therefore persuaded to stay in Birla House. Living in that palatial mansion, surrounded by dear devotees and with all the resources of the Nehru Government at his command, Gandhi, strangely enough, felt much more helpless than he had felt in Calcutta where he had lived precariously in a shambles, surrounded by angry young men snorting with impatience at the presence of the dubious Suhrawardy as the Mahatma's companion and comrade in a sacred mission.

In his very first public utterance in Delhi, Gandhi made no secret of his sense of disappointment that he could see no one among Muslim, Sikh or Hindu leaders who could help him to control the unruly elements in their respective communities. A sad confession which was an indirect and veiled compliment to the emotional and volatile Bengali who, if he was capable of sinking low, was also capable of rising high.

Great was the misery which met his eye wherever Gandhi went visiting the improvised camps of Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan or Muslim evacuees waiting anxiously to be sent to Pakistan; but what pained him even more than the plight of the unhappy victims was the fire of anger that burned in their eyes, the lust for vengeance that seemed to gnaw at their hearts. What they had suffered as innocents, they itched to inflict on other innocents. 'Have the citizens of Delhi gone mad?' the Mahatma cried out in anguish. 'Have they no humanity left in them?'

What was happening in the capital of free India outraged not only his humanity but his pride as well. He was proud of India as the land of tolerance and charity, the age-old laboratory of unity in diversity, the nursery, as he put it, of many blended cultures and civilizations. 'If India fails, Asia dies,' he said. Delhi should hold aloft the banner of civilized behaviour, irrespective of what Pakistan did. 'Then only can it claim the proud privilege of having broken the vicious circle of private revenge and retaliation.'

But his words seemed to have lost their old magic. In the undivided India the Muslims had vilified him as their Arch Enemy, the wily Hindu who pretended to be their friend so as to dupe them the better. It was now the Hindus' turn to malign him as the Mussulman Number One who was less concerned with the Hindu sufferers than with the fate of those who had wilfully brought about this suffering. He was a Hindu 'fifth columnist', not Mohandas but 'Mohamed' Gandhi!

As long as his unique leadership and moral prestige were indispensable against the British, his countrymen had gladly obeyed and followed him despite his 'crankiness', but now that independence had been achieved and the Hindu dream of reviving the glory of this 'sacred land' could be made true, why put up with this old crank who had outlived his use?

Gandhi could sense this change in the people's temper and attitude. His sleep, always calm and innocent like a babe's, began to be troubled by unpleasant dreams—now of a Hindu mob invading his room, now of a Muslim mob, and he expostulating with them or chiding them. 'Sleeping or waking, I can think of nothing else.'

So intense was his anguish at the moral depravity around him that he who recited the Gita every day and was never tired of propagating its doctrine of equanimity, of rising above the pair of opposites, the flux of good and evil, was unable to live up to it when he needed its support most. He did his duty, indeed, every minute of his waking hours, but was he indifferent to the fruit thereof, as the Gita enjoined? He recognized this failure in himself, if failure it was, and confessed, 'If one has completely merged oneself with Him, he should be content to leave good and bad, success and failure to Him and be careful for nothing. I feel I have not attained that state and, therefore, my striving is incomplete.'

When congratulations poured in from all over the world on 2 October which marked his 78th birthday, he asked if it would not have been more appropriate to offer condolences. His request to all his well-wishers was to pray that either the present horror should end 'or He should take me away. I do not wish another birthday to overtake me in an India still in flames.' He confessed that his earlier, oft-repeated 'desire to live for 125 years had completely vanished as a result of this continued fratricide. I do not want to be a helpless witness of it.'

This unbearable agony was, no doubt, a measure of his moral sensibility, of his love for his people and his pride in their spiritual heritage; perhaps, it was also aggravated and made somewhat morbid by his failing health, his persistent cough, lack of sufficient sleep and by a gnawing awareness that having won all the previous battles he was losing the last one. He was too honest and too magnanimous to find fault with others and not with himself. 'There must be some subtle flaw somewhere in my conception and practice of truth and *ahimsa* of which this is the result,' he said. 'I mistook the non-violence of the weak, which is no non-violence at all, for true non-violence. Perhaps God purposely blinded me. I should rather say that I was blind. I could not see.'

Although the fury of violence and lawlessness had considerably abated since he arrived on the scene in early September, Gandhi was far from satisfied, knowing that the comparative calm was more outward than real. As he wrote to a correspondent on the new year day of 1948, 'The city is quiet for fear of the police. But there is fire of anger in the hearts of the people. I must either perish in that fire or put it out. I do not yet see a third course.'

Added to this anguish was the vexation and shame caused by mutual suspicion and bickering among his dearest and most trusted comrades in the Union Cabinet. The Cabinet's decision to withhold the payment to Pakistan of its share of the cash balances of undivided India (amounting to rupees 55 crores or about £44 million) pending the settlement of the Kashmir issue, did not seem to Gandhi to be morally justifiable, whatever its legal validity. Privately he asked Mountbatten what he personally thought of it. Mountbatten replied that such withholding would be the 'first dishonourable act' of the Indian Government.

The cumulative weight of these unhappy happenings pressed heavily on Gandhi's conscience. The mounting sense of helplessness made him almost peevish and he grew irritable. His secretary-biographer Pyarelal has recorded: 'Time and again he complained of his proneness to irritability which he had to struggle to keep down. One sentence that was constantly on his lips was, "Don't you see I am mounted on my funeral pyre?" and sometimes when he wanted particularly to bring home a peremptory warning: "You should know it is a corpse that is telling you this." ' When Mira Behn asked him if he would visit Rishikesh and inaugurate her cattle centre, he had replied, 'What is the good of counting on a corpse?'

All this depression vanished when on 12 January he announced at his prayer gathering that he had decided to go on a fast which would begin on the following noon and would end either with his death or when he was convinced that the various communities had resumed their friendly relations, not because of pressure from outside but of their own free will. 'My impotence,' he confessed, 'has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately the fast is undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three days. At last the decision flashed upon me, and it makes me happy.'

How well what he described as 'my greatest fast' helped to restore his normal cheer of spirits and good humour can be seen from the letter he dictated for Mira Behn three days later: 'I am dictating this immediately after the 3.30 a.m. prayer while I am taking my meal such as a fasting man with prescribed food can take. Don't be shocked. The food consists of 8 ozs. of hot water sipped with difficulty. You sip it as poison, well knowing that in result it is nectar. It revives me whenever I take it. Strange to say this time I am able to take about 8 meals of this poison-tasting but nectar-like meal. Yet I claim to be fasting, and credulous people accept it! What a strange world!'

While the fast, eighteenth and the last of his life, restored the Mahatma's good cheer, it robbed those around him of what little cheer they had. The nation was stunned and waited with bated breath to see what would happen. The first and immediate effect of the fast was the Union Cabinet's reversal of its earlier decision and announcement that Pakistan's share of the cash balances would be paid without delay.

Gandhi was too weak to stand a long fast and as his condition deteriorated, frantic efforts were made to persuade the leaders of all major communities to give a written pledge to the Mahatma that the life, property and honour of the Muslims would henceforth be safe. This was done on the sixth day of the fast when he was persuaded to break it.

Mountbatten's Press Attaché, who was present throughout the period in Delhi and closely watched the public reaction—being a journalist he was able to meet all and sundry—wrote in his diary: 'You have to live in the vicinity of a Gandhi fast to understand its pulling power. The whole of Gandhi's life is a fascinating study in the art of influencing the masses, and judging by the success he has achieved in this mysterious domain, he must be accounted one of the greatest artists in leadership of all time. He has a genius for acting through symbols which all can understand.'

Unfortunately, the power of symbols does not last for ever, and 'one of the greatest artists in leadership' had finally to act through the greatest symbol 'of all time'—the Cross he loved so much—to quench for the time being the flame of madness that threatened at one time to engulf the whole land.

Meanwhile, the fast did indeed tame the savagery that had run rampant in the capital. But how far it really transformed the hearts of the people, as the Mahatma hoped it had, is debatable. No doubt it relieved the fear and anxiety of the Indian Muslims and gave them a sense of comparative security. Whether the hearts were transformed or not, the fast did have a chastening and civilizing effect on the outward behaviour of all the communities. What, however, it did transform was Gandhi's image in the Muslim world from the Enemy Number One to a Noble Son of the East. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan spoke of 'a new and tremendous wave of feeling and desire for friendship between India and Pakistan.'

The British, too, now that they were no longer directly involved in Gandhi's 'antics', were for the first time able to see the merit of his fast. British journals and Englishmen who had poured scorn on some of his earlier fasts and condemned them as blackmailing tactics suddenly realized that 'the success of Mahatma Gandhi's fast demonstrates a power which may prove greater than the atom bomb and which the West should watch with envy and hope.' The London *Times* wrote: 'Mr Gandhi's courageous idealism has never been more plainly vindicated.' Arthur Moore, former Editor of the Calcutta *Statesman*, was so deeply moved that he too went on a sympathetic fast.

The spectacle of voluntary suffering embraced for a noble end cannot but win sympathy and admiration of all who care for human good and moral values. Gandhi believed that his fasts were undertaken to purify himself and to help others to turn the searchlight inwards. Without doubt they did so to a certain extent. They also enabled the Mahatma to cut many a Gordian knot by isolating the moral issue from its political tangle and staking his life on it. And since, as he put it, 'no man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than his life', the impact of the fast on others was considerable. Besides, the fast not only focussed public attention on the moral issue but drove home the lesson, vividly and poignantly, that moral values were worth more in the long run than the most precious of human lives.

Nevertheless, one may not ignore the fact that the fast evoked varying reactions from different people at different times. It inspired awe in some, a sense of moral elevation in others; some it irritated and some others squirmed under its moral pressure; though all held their breath and watched, spellbound with poignant apprehension. Gandhi himself insisted that his fasts were not meant to be coercive. So he believed, and the honesty of his belief cannot be questioned. All the same, could a dispassionate observer maintain that the coercive element was not there? How is one to explain the fact that the Mahatma's many fasts, sublime penances, to use Tagore's words, not unoften embarrassed and irritated those for whose moral benefit they were undertaken? Those who were not directly involved felt their sublime beauty most, but they whose souls were to be saved thereby, squirmed uncomfortably.

This last and 'greatest fast' alienated not a few among his own community of Hindus who felt that the Mahatma, to please his own conscience, was being less than just to the Hindus. That he was always hardest on those he loved best and whose welfare he desired most made no difference to these critics, for Gandhi's conception of wherein lay man's true welfare and theirs were not only unlike but opposed.

This aspect of Gandhi's deepest concern for the moral discipline of those he cared for most is well illustrated by the ordeal he once made his grand-daughter Manu go through during their trek on foot in Noakhali. It was Gandhi's practice, on reaching a village, to wash his feet before sitting down. Once as he was about to do so, he missed the pumice stone with which he used to rub the soles. Manu who was in charge of it had forgetfully left it behind in a weaver's cottage where the party had halted on the way. She must make amends for this failure in duty. Gandhi sternly called on her to go back forthwith, alone and unescorted, to recover the lost stone.

The way was lonely and not without hazards. Manu obeyed, her heart in her mouth. Luckily she recovered the stone and came back unscathed—but in tears. Gandhi laughed and said: 'I knew better than you the danger. If some ruffian had carried you off and you had met your death courageously, my heart would have danced with joy. But I would have felt humiliated and unhappy if you had turned back or run away from danger out of timidity or fear. As I heard you sing day after day the song, *Walk Alone*, I wondered within myself whether it was mere bragging. Today's incident should give you an idea how relentless I can be in putting to the test those I love most.'

And when a little later, in Patna, the same Manu had to be operated upon for appendicitis, Gandhi sat through the operation, wearing an antiseptic mask, his hand lovingly resting on her forehead.

Unfortunately, those who are capable of understanding the value of such love are almost as rare as those capable of giving it. The general mass of Hindu and Sikh public could hardly be expected to rise to such moral heights and appreciate that what the Mahatma asked of them was after all no more than civilized, humane behaviour. When passions are roused, what is sensible and obvious is seen in lurid light as unreasonable and unjust—like an alcoholic's violent reaction to a good friend's effort to wean him from the deadly addiction. And so the people resented what seemed to them were the Mahatma's unfair demands on their patience and undue concessions to Muslim interests. This pent-up resentment literally exploded two days after the fast was broken.

He Did and Died

IT HAD long been Gandhi's practice to pray with the crowd. Every evening, wherever he happened to be, he held his prayers in an open ground, the congregation, large or small, facing him. The ritual followed no orthodox pattern but was eclectic, evolved by him as a meeting ground of many religious faiths. Select verses from their scriptures were recited and hymns sung. At the end he would address a few words to the gathering which were generally made available to the whole nation over the radio and through the press. He did not speak on a set religious theme but on any issue that happened to be topical. Whatever the topic, he raised it, in his characteristic manner, to a moral and spiritual plane so that even when it concerned a political matter it sounded as if a man of God were teaching the way of righteousness.

All could join the congregation, without any restriction and with no questions asked. Sitting on a raised platform, in front of all, Gandhi offered an easy target. So far the only protection he had needed was from the overwhelming veneration of the crowd pressing forward to touch his feet, as is the Hindu way of showing respect. But now the times were out of joint. Violent passions had been aroused and hatred was in the air. Muslim fanaticism in Pakistan had provoked its counterpart in India, and the militant spearhead of this reaction looked upon Gandhi as the main stumbling block to their lust for vengeance for the atrocities committed on Hindus and Sikhs in the name of Islam.

As in Pakistan, so here, the cry of religion in danger served as a cloak of idealism over the demon of barbarism. Gandhi had been warned and the security police were in jitters. But he declined any kind of armed protection. He cared not to live save by the power of love. Forty years earlier, when his life had been threatened by an angry Pathan in Johannesburg, he had calmly said: 'To die by the hand of a brother, rather than by disease or in such other way, cannot be for me a matter of sorrow. And if, even in such a case, I am free from the thought of anger or hatred against my assailant, I know that that will redound to my eternal welfare . . .'

On 20 January the Fates put him through one more test before granting the boon of 'eternal welfare' ten days later. He was in the midst of his usual post-prayer talk to the assembled gathering when a bomb exploded a few yards away from where he sat. Gandhi continued his address, unconcerned. Later, after the young man who had thrown the bomb had been caught and had readily admitted that he had meant to kill Gandhi, when Lady Mountbatten congratulated the Mahatma on his 'escape' and on his brave unconcern at the time of the explosion, he explained that he could claim no merit for courage, since he had imagined that the noise was caused by routine target practice by the army. He added, 'If somebody fired at me point-blank and I faced the bullet with a smile, repeating the name of God in my heart, I should indeed be deserving of congratulations.'

He had always loved the Cross and had been fascinated by this symbol of crucifixion, of suffering cheerfully borne to expiate the wrongs of one's erring fellowmen. An inward longing for martyrdom, a subconscious urge which he sometimes expressed as a conscious wish, seemed to have haunted his imagination which the bomb explosion sharpened and made more explicit. Several times during the following ten days, reports his grand-daughter Manu to whom he would think aloud his thoughts as she sat massaging his head or feet at night before he fell asleep, he talked of 'assassin's bullets' or 'a shower of bullets' — not as a foreboding of evil but as a longing for a fitting climax to a life of striving.

On 29 January, his last night on this earth, he said to her:

'If I were to die of disease, be it even a pimple, you must shout to the world from house-tops that I was a false mahatma, even though people may swear at you for saying so. Then my soul, wherever it be, will rest in peace. If, on the other hand, someone were to put a bullet through me, as someone tried to throw a bomb at me the other day, and I met this bullet on my bare chest, without a groan and with Rama's name on my lips, then only you should say that I was a true mahatma. This will bring good to the Indian people.'

Lest this is taken as a prophecy, it is well to remember that Gandhi never claimed the prophet's foreknowledge of what lay ahead. He had, as a matter of fact, chalked out a tentative programme of departure for his Wardha ashram three days later. From there he intended to proceed to Pakistan, hoping to convince Jinnah's Muslim League Government that the welfare of their country and his lay in mutual goodwill and trust. He also knew that his presence in Pakistan would put heart in the Hindu remnant left behind.

He hoped to do all this, but no longer had the assurance of old days when every item of his itinerary would be carefully planned in advance. He who was always meticulous about his programme and careful and precise in his engagements was content to be vague and uncertain this time—as though having put himself entirely in God's hands he did not care what happened next. When Manu suggested informing Wardha about his proposed visit there three days later, he did not let her do so, saying, 'Who knows what is in store tomorrow?'

He was sad and depressed that within a few days of the attainment of Independence, the mood of the people had undergone a radical change for the worse and the heroic ideal of struggle and sacrifice had given place to a hankering for power and easy living; that religion which teaches self-restraint and compassion was being used as an excuse for unrestrained hatred and violence. He was not given to reading poetry as such—devotional hymns and didactic verse sufficed for him—but on this day he suddenly recited a couplet of the Urdu poet

Nazir of Akbarabad (another name of Agra) reminiscent of the old Khayyam:

> Short-lived is the glory of Spring in the world's garden,
> Watch the show while it lasts.

The day's routine on 30 January began, as usual, at 3.30 a.m. with prayers. He asked Manu to sing a hymn which he had never asked to be sung before:

> Tired or not,
> O man, do not take rest.

Nor did he take any, however weary and sick at heart he might have been. The day was packed, like other days, with interviews and correspondence. He was anxious to complete—and he did complete—the draft of what was later described by his biographers as his Last Will and Testament. It was in fact his proposed scheme for the future shape of the Congress which he wished the Congress leaders to consider.

He more than anyone else had fashioned the present shape of Congress, had welded the diverse interests of which it was composed into a formidable instrument for winning the independence of India. He now felt that the Congress having achieved its objective had outlived its use and should disband itself. Congressmen who continued to believe in his ideal of social, moral and economic independence of India's several hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns should band themselves into a Lok Sevak Sangh (*lit.* People's Servants' Society) and dedicate themselves to voluntary service of the hungry and helpless millions in the villages, leaving the scramble for office and power to professional politicians.

The last interview was with Sardar Patel. There had been persistent rumours of a rift between Patel and Nehru, and it had been suggested that one of them might quit the Cabinet to give the other a free hand. Gandhi wished to impress on

Sardar Patel that the country needed both him and Nehru. (Gandhi was to see Nehru after the prayer meeting.) While they were talking, Manu informed Gandhi that two leaders from Kathiawar were waiting to see him. 'Tell them,' replied Gandhi, 'that if I am alive, they can talk to me after the prayer on my walk.'

It was getting late for the prayer and Gandhi who hated unpunctuality hurried to the lawn outside where the congregation was already seated, his hands on the shoulders of his two grand-daughters (more correctly grand-nieces), Manu and Abha, his walking-sticks, as he used to say. Ascending the few steps he halted, took his hands off their shoulders and joined his palms to acknowledge the greetings of the crowd. A well-built young man pushed forward and, jerking aside Manu who tried to stop him, knelt before the Mahatma as if to pay his reverence and fired point-blank three shots aimed at Gandhi's chest. Two bullets passed right through, the third was found embedded in the right lung. The Mahatma sank to the ground. The only sound that escaped his lips was the word, Rama, his favourite name of God. Before the crowd realized what had happened, he was dead.

He died as he had always wished to die—without a groan and with God's name on his lips. He had pledged himself to do or die. He both did and died. God had heard his prayer and kept his wish.

Who has the right to call such an end tragic?

District Library
Nava Kadal, Srinagar.

Index

Abdulla, Sheth 18, 24, 42
Aga Khan Palace 152
Ahimsa (see Non-violence)
Ahmedabad 103, 106, 116, 119, 127, 142
Alam, Mir 74, 77
Ambedkar, Dr B. R. 54
Amritsar 112, 114
Andrews, Charles Freer 94, 101, 120, 161
Arnold, Sir Edwin 9
Attlee, Clement R. 162
Autobiography 25, 115, 127
Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam 163

Baker, Mr 24
Balasundaram 34
Banaras Hindu University 104
Belldon (of *Life* and *Time*) 150
Besant, Annie 9
Bhavnagar 7, 10, 12
Bible, The 10, 25, 60
Bihar 105, 142, 143, 167, 172, 173, 174, 175
Birla House 186
Blavatsky, Madame 9
Boer War 47, 50-52, 67, 71, 81, 99, 145
Booth, Dr 46, 50
Bose, Nirmal Kumar 169, 172, 184
Bose, Subhas Chandra 150
Brahmacharya 68, 69, 81
Broomfield, R. S. 119, 120
B.B.C. 180

Cabinet Mission 162, 163, 175
Calcutta 8, 42, 53, 54, 103, 164, 165, 166, 167, 179, 181, 182, 183, 185, 186
Campbell-Johnson, Alan 177, 179, 184, 190
Carlyle, Thomas 10
Carpenter, Edward 9
Cartwright, A. 73
Chamberlain, Joseph 44, 55, 56
Champaran 105, 106, 108
Chauri Chaura 118
Chelmsford, Lord 108
Chirol, Sir Valentine 113
Christ (see Jesus)
Christen, Kim 165
Churchill, Winston 83, 131, 133, 134, 136, 147, 148, 149, 153, 157, 162
Civilization 46, 80, 82, 84, 85, 123, 125
Coates, Michael 23, 24
Communal Award 139
Congress, Indian National 33, 34, 53, 114, 115, 116, 122, 123, 129, 130, 132, 143, 144, 146, 147, 148, 149, 151, 159, 163, 164, 169, 173, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 184, 197
Congress, Natal Indian 33, 34
Constituent Assembly 175
Cripps, Sir Stafford 147, 148, 149, 150, 163
Curtis, Lionel 19

Dandi 130
Das, C. R. 122
Datta, Sudhindranath 182
Davidson, Joe 133, 134

INDEX

Delhi 108, 110, 111, 112, 121, 159, 163, 166, 169, 175, 179, 186, 187
Desai, Mahadev 3, 54, 78, 127, 138, 152, 154, 182
Dhingra, Madanlal 82, 83
Dietetic experiments 36, 37, 61, 65, 66
Doke, Rev. Joseph xii, 14, 74, 75, 134
Durban 17, 18, 19, 22, 28, 37, 40, 41, 42, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63, 65, 71, 77, 84, 89
Dyer, General 112, 114

Eiffel Tower 14
Einstein, Albert xiv
Elwin, Verrier 26, 27

Fasts 89, 107, 112, 121, 167, 168, 190, 191, 192
Fischer, Louis 150
Frydman, Maurice 158

Gandhi, Abha 198
Gandhi, Harilal 138
Gandhi, Karamchand 2
Gandhi, Kasturbai 5, 8, 45, 48, 69, 79, 81, 97, 103, 109, 152, 154, 158
Gandhi, Maganlal 100
Gandhi, Manilal 61
Gandhi, Manu 138, 169, 192, 193, 195, 196, 197, 198
Gandhi, Putlibai 2
Gandhi, Uttamchand 2
Ghaffar Khan, Abdul 146
Gita, Bhagavad 1, 9, 10, 60, 61, 62, 188
Gokhale, G. K. 41, 42, 54, 91, 92, 94, 97, 98, 100, 101, 102, 120
Green Pamphlet 40, 42
Guide to London 36

Hardinge, Lord 94
Hardwar 102
Harijan (weekly) 141, 143
Harijans (see Untouchables)
Hind Swaraj 85, 86, 87, 112, 114, 123
Huxley, Aldous 126

Indentured labour 30, 34, 35, 92
Indian Ambulance Corps 50, 67, 99, 100, 108
Indian Opinion 58, 59, 62, 63, 64, 67, 72, 84, 88, 89
Irwin, Lord (later Halifax) 131, 132, 137
Ismay, Lord 176

Jallianwala Bag 112, 116, 117
Jesus 24, 25, 60, 62
Jinnah, M. A. 148, 150, 156, 157, 159, 163, 164, 165, 175, 176, 177, 196
Johannesburg 20, 25, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 70, 72, 73, 75, 77, 88, 89, 134, 174, 195
Just's *Return to Nature* 61, 62

Kalighat Temple 54
Kallenbach, Hermann 88, 89, 93, 94, 97, 98, 100
Kheda 107, 108
Khilafat 113, 115, 121, 155
Kingsford, Anna 9
Kingsley Hall 132
Kripalani, Acharya J. B. 169
Kuhne, Dr 61

Lancashire 132, 133
Lenin 95, 133, 134
Lester, Muriel 132
Linlithgow, Lord 153
Lipmann, Walter 180
Lok Sevak Sangh 197
London 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 28, 36, 60, 80, 81, 82, 84, 88, 98, 100, 130, 132, 136, 175.

MacDonald, Ramsay 130
Machinery 87, 123, 124
Maddock, Col 120
Mahtab, Sheikh 3, 4, 5
Maitland, Edward 9, 37

Mazmudar 12
Mehta, Sir Pherozeshah 41
Mira Behn (Madeleine Slade) 127, 128, 131, 133, 136, 138, 142, 152. 153, 183, 189, 190
Moore, Arthur 191
Mott, Dr John 20
Mountbatten, Lady 195
Mountbatten, Lord 175, 176, 178, 179, 185, 189, 190
Murray, Gilbert 94
Muslim League 148, 150, 164, 165, 166, 169, 175, 176, 181, 196
Mussolini 136

Naidu, Sarojini 152, 170
Naoroji, Dadabhai 30, 33, 39
Natal 18, 19, 22, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 39, 40, 42, 43, 50, 56, 57, 93
Natal Advertiser 67
Natal Mercury 37
Nature-cure 61, 62, 163
Navajivan 115
Nayar, Sushila 152
Nazir of Akbarabad 197
Nehru, Jawaharlal 21, 115, 137, 148, 164, 169, 173, 176, 177, 178, 186, 197, 198
Nehru, Motilal 122
Noakhali 165, 166, 167, 168, 173, 174, 181, 183, 192
Non-co-operation 114, 115, 117
Non-violence 99, 103, 107, 108, 111, 115, 118, 122, 127, 129, 155, 165, 182, 188

Pakistan 164, 177, 178, 180, 181, 183, 186, 187, 189, 190, 191, 194, 196
Paris 14, 134
Partition 176, 177, 178, 179, 181, 182, 183
Patel, Sardar Vallabhbhai 178, 181, 197, 198
Pearson, W. W. 94, 102, 117
Pethick-Lawrence 163
Phoenix Settlement 63, 64, 69, 76, 79, 81, 89, 92, 101, 102, 103
Polak, Henry 62, 63, 65, 93, 94, 99, 108
Polak, Millie Graham 25, 37, 62, 63, 65, 66, 76, 81, 91
Poona 3, 41, 78, 102, 120, 137, 141, 152, 155, 163
Porbandar 1, 2, 3, 101
Pretoria 19, 21, 22, 24, 28, 36, 73
Pretoria News 50
Punjab 114, 174, 177, 184, 185, 186
Pyarelal 189

"Quit India" 150, 151

Rainy, Sir George 106
Rajagopalachari, C. 111, 156
Rajkot 3, 7, 10, 15, 16, 28, 30, 40, 46, 54, 55, 101
Ramakrishna XIII
Raychandbhai 62
Ripon, Lord 30
Rolland, Romain 97, 117, 118, 134, 135
Rome 136, 153
Round Table Conference 130, 131, 132, 139
Rowlatt Bill 110, 111, 113
Ruskin, John 62, 63, 84, 112
Rustomji 43, 44

Sabarmati Ashram 37, 81, 103, 105, 106, 127, 129, 141, 142, 144
Salt, Henry 9
Samuel, Lord 180
San Francisco Conference 159
Santiniketan 101, 102, 140, 161, 170
Sastri, Srinivasa 120
Satyagraha 51, 54, 72, 95, 112, 147, 150, 167
Satyagraha in South Africa 92
Satyagraha Sabha 111
Schlesin, Miss 93
Sevagram 20, 144, 166
Shastri, Parchure 138

INDEX

Sheridan, Clare 133
Simon Commission 129
Smuts, General 72, 73, 74, 77, 78, 80, 92, 94, 95, 153, 174
Spion Kop 50
Srirampur 169, 170
Statesman, Calcutta 164, 191
Stead, W. T. 51
Story of My Experiments with Truth (see Autobiography)
Suffragettes 81
Suhrawardy 166, 181, 183, 186

Tagore, Maharshi Devendranath 54
Tagore, Rabindranath XI, XIII, XV, 5, 54, 101, 102, 116, 117, 124, 136, 139, 140, 145, 161, 170, 192
Theosophists 60
Thoreau, H. D. 62, 72, 85
Tilak, B. G. 41
Times, London 30, 35, 191
Tolstoy Farm 88–90, 93
Tolstoy, Leo 5, 14, 62, 75, 82, 84, 85, 87, 134, 135
Transvaal 19, 22, 42, 56, 57, 70, 71, 73, 75, 78, 91, 93
Transvaal Critic 62
Unto This Last 63, 112
Untouchables 48, 54, 103, 104, 122, 128, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 158, 163

Vatican 136
Vegetarian Society, London 11, 37
Vegetarian, The 8, 12, 13
Victoria, Queen 41, 71
Villeneuve 134
Vivekananda, Swami XIII, 54

Wardha 142, 143, 196
Washington Post 180
Wavell, Lord 154, 175
Wellington, Duke of 95
West, Albert 59, 62, 63, 79
Willingdon, Lord 132, 137
World War I 98, 100, 108, 110, 145
World War II 145, 158, 160, 162, 165
Wyllie, Sir Curzon 82, 83

Yeravda Jail 3, 10, 26, 27, 54, 78, 131, 136, 137
Young India 115, 141

Zulu Rebellion 47, 67–69, 99